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China's first environmental liability policy pays out

By Jin Zhu

An environmental pollution case involving 120 Hunan Province families was settled within 10 days by taking out an environmental liability policy. This is the first case of its kind in China, the Ministry of Environmental Protection announced on Monday.

A Chloride Gas leak that occurred at the Hunan Haohua Chemical company on September 28 poisoned local vegetable fields. After the event, as many

as 120 villagers claimed damages from the company.

"Since the company bought environmental liability insurance valued at 40,800 yuan from Ping'an Insurance in July, we were able to offer 11,000 yuan to the local villagers as compensation," Zeng Qijin, manager of Haohua, said. "In retrospect, it was a good way to protect ourselves from serious loss."

"Environmental liability insurance effectively protected

the rights of pollution victims and safeguarded stability of local industry," Pan Yue, deputy minister, said.

According to statistics from the ministry, now it is the peak season for pollution cases. There were 108 cases filed in last year, though most did not pay an insurance compensation.

Pan said although the insurance is still new, it is considered one of the most effective market instruments and incentives to foster environ-

mental protection.

Earlier this year, the ministry and the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) carried out a pilot program of environmental liability insurance in Hunan, focusing on 18 chemical, nonferrous metallurgical and steel enterprises.

However, a senior manager at Ping'an said the government does not require enterprises to take out environmental liability insurance, and promoting it remains difficult.

So far, five enterprises in Hunan Province have taken out the insurance.

"The small companies have no funds to pay insurance, and the big companies prefer to pay compensations out of their own pockets," Wang Lu, an account executive at Ping'an's Hunan branch, said.

Wang Canfa, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law, said insurance purchases should be mandatory for enterprises.

Cremation too costly, man buries his mom in pond

By Venus Lee

A migrant worker in Nan'an, Fujian Province, abandoned his mother's body in a village pond because he could not afford to have her cremated. He has been arrested on suspicion of insulting the dead last week.

The body was found on the side of a pond in Dating village of Nan'an city. Local police connected the body with Wang Xiaoxi, 28, who moved from Anhui Province to Fujian with his widowed mother in 2006 to work in a countryside factory. His mother was senile and had dementia.

On the morning of November 3, his mother was found dead when his friend went to prepare food for her. Since Wang had no money, he decided to bury his mother in the water. He placed her body in a sack with several big stones, tied it up and pushed her into the pond at night.

"I kowtowed to the body several times before I put her in the water, and I cried as I watched her sink," Wang said.

"I know I am an unfilial son. I couldn't help my mother to live better while she was alive. I can't even give her a decent burial after death," he said.

Wang said he earns 400 yuan each month, which could

only meet their most basic subsistence needs. The cost of cremation in Nan'an exceeds 1,000 yuan, according to the Nan'an Civil Affairs Bureau.

Nan'an police have cremated the body. Wang, if convicted of insulting the dead, will face a maximum three years imprisonment or probation.

However Yin Jianping, a lawyer from the T&D Associates Attorneys Office, said, "Although the abandoning of his mother's body in the pond is a departure from common custom, he did not behave maliciously or willfully. So I think his behavior can't constitute an insult to the dead."

Du Pusheng, the vice director of the local civil affairs bureau, said that although there is no special subsidy fund available for poor people's funeral expenses, people in need who can provide a low-income certificate can apply to the bureau for help - no matter if one is or is not a migrant.

"Our public services still have a lot of problems. Disadvantaged groups cannot convey their problems to policy makers and have few channels for recourse," Xu Weiqing, the researcher in Institute of Sociology at Fujian Academy of Social Sciences, said.

Porridge for the poor inspires all



The porridge stand in Wenzhou

Photo provided by Fengzhizi821

By Jackie Zhang

The story of the charitable Honggiting porridge stand in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, has touched many readers since blogger Fengzhizi 821 first reported it last Friday. Since then, more details about its operators have come out gradually.

The porridge stand is located at the foot of the city's Huagaishan Mountain. Although it is called "Honggiting," or Hongri Pavilion, it is only a shed. The nearby pavilion was dismantled years ago.

About 10 years ago, it became a place where a group of retirees offered free tea in the summer. When they saw so many poor people had no food or clothes during the cold winter, they felt sad.

The stand's operators began to offer hot porridge and pickled vegetables for free in the spring, autumn

and winter four years ago.

Ye Baochun, 82, is one of the people who started the porridge stand. His friends Zhu Yonglin and Zhang Mingsen, both over 70, supported and helped him with daily operations. They save money and use it to make porridge. Now, some 600 people come to the stand for its free porridge.

"We just wanted to help the migrant workers in Wenzhou and some people who cannot find jobs. There are also some old people who can't support themselves. We just want them to have food every day," Ye said.

Every morning, when most people are still asleep, the old people start work on the day's porridge and pickles. After a busy morning, they sit in the park in the afternoon, listening to local *guci* opera, and then begin to prepare for the next morning's rush.

"We want to establish a model for young people [to follow]," Ye said. "It is easy to do good for one day, but it is difficult to keep on doing it."

As more and more people have started to visit the stand, its daily operating costs have risen to over 700 yuan. Many people come to the stand just to donate money.

The organizers have posted a board beside the stand to record the names of their benefactors. Some people donate money; some donate rice and vegetables; others bring moon cakes on Mid-Autumn Day and *zongzi* on Duanwu Festival.

Chen Xiulan is one of benefactors. She is not rich and lives in a shabby house, and her income is 400 yuan per month. Despite this, she still supports the stand. "I don't need the money, so I donate it to those in need," Chen said.

Out-of-service subway cars play new role



Used subway cars are students' new dorms

Photo provided by Beijing Subway

By Venus Lee

Twelve of Beijing's retired subway cars are headed for Guanyuan, Sichuan Province, where they will be converted into temporary dorms for students in the earthquake zone.

The subway cars have been transported to the province in five sets since July. They have been distributed to three schools in Guanyuan. Each car was refitted with 16 to 18 bunk beds with a central aisle. The

60 cars can provide housing to a total of 2,000 students.

"The three high-voltage electrical control boxes were disassembled for security, and another four low-voltage boxes were left to keep the lights running," Jia Peng, the director of news office in Beijing Metro Corporation, said.

"Our school received 12 carriages. Each carriage holds 30 students if two students share one bed," said Yang Guangguo,

the director of facility management department of the Guanyuan English School.

Yang said the subway cars are warmer than the former makeshift houses, and the lighting conditions are better.

The students said it was more novel, warm and bright, though they did complain about having to exit the cars to wash or use the restroom, since the subway cars lack plumbing, he said.

Where is your home, little snow leopards?

Abandoned babies found in the meadow

The case of the South China Tiger photo ended three weeks ago. But the nation's attention was quickly diverted by another cat headline: 'Xinjiang herdsman finds two snow leopards.'

This time, the cats were not made out of cardboard.

Before herdsman Zhang Peiwei phoned the media, he had rarely left his pasture on the Tianshan Mountains and never thought of becoming a headline.

Zhang said he found two baby cats in the meadow of a Tianshan valley when he took his herd out to graze in May. "I thought they were wild cats," he said. Out of curiosity, Zhang brought the shivering cats home and hoped to keep them as pets.

As they grew up, Zhang found them too extraordinary to be wild cats. They sneaked out to kill and eat a hen when they were two months old. It was not until they killed a lamb in July did Zhang realize they were not safe pets. "I found a lamb covered in blood inside when I went out to feed the cats."

He was astonished and turned to the local government to have wildlife workers determine what kind of cats they were. He was surprised to learn the cats were snow leopards, which are listed on the same level of protection as pandas.

The wildlife bureau allowed Zhang to keep the leopards while they decided how to handle the case. Realizing the bureau would avoid handling the case, Zhang contacted local media to put pressure on them. "I want more people to know about this so the related department will have to quickly come up with a solution," he said.

Another reason was to promote knowledge about snow leopards. "Many people who have not seen one think it is white, but in actuality it is not," Zhang said. He thinks if more people can identify snow leopards they will be less likely to injure the animals.

While his calls found the TV and newspaper exposure he sought for the cats, it also brought himself and his family under public scrutiny.

Zoologists cry 'impossible'

"There is no way he could so easily find baby snow leopards," said Ma Ming, deputy director of the Zoological Society of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Ma accused Zhang of lying to the public about the cats' origins. "This is nothing new," Ma said, pointing to past cases where poachers claimed to have stumbled on a snow leopard to escape punishment.

"Can you imagine losing your child and not searching for them? A mother snow leopard is just as protective of her cubs," Ma said.

He said it was impossible for the mother to have left her cubs in an open space. Normally, a snow leopard makes its den on a cliff, high up on the mountain.

"Snow leopards live high above the meadow area and only run about the snow line," Ma said. "One cannot get a baby snow leopard without entering its den. Normal people would not challenge an adult snow leopard for its cubs - unless they were prepared poachers," Ma said.

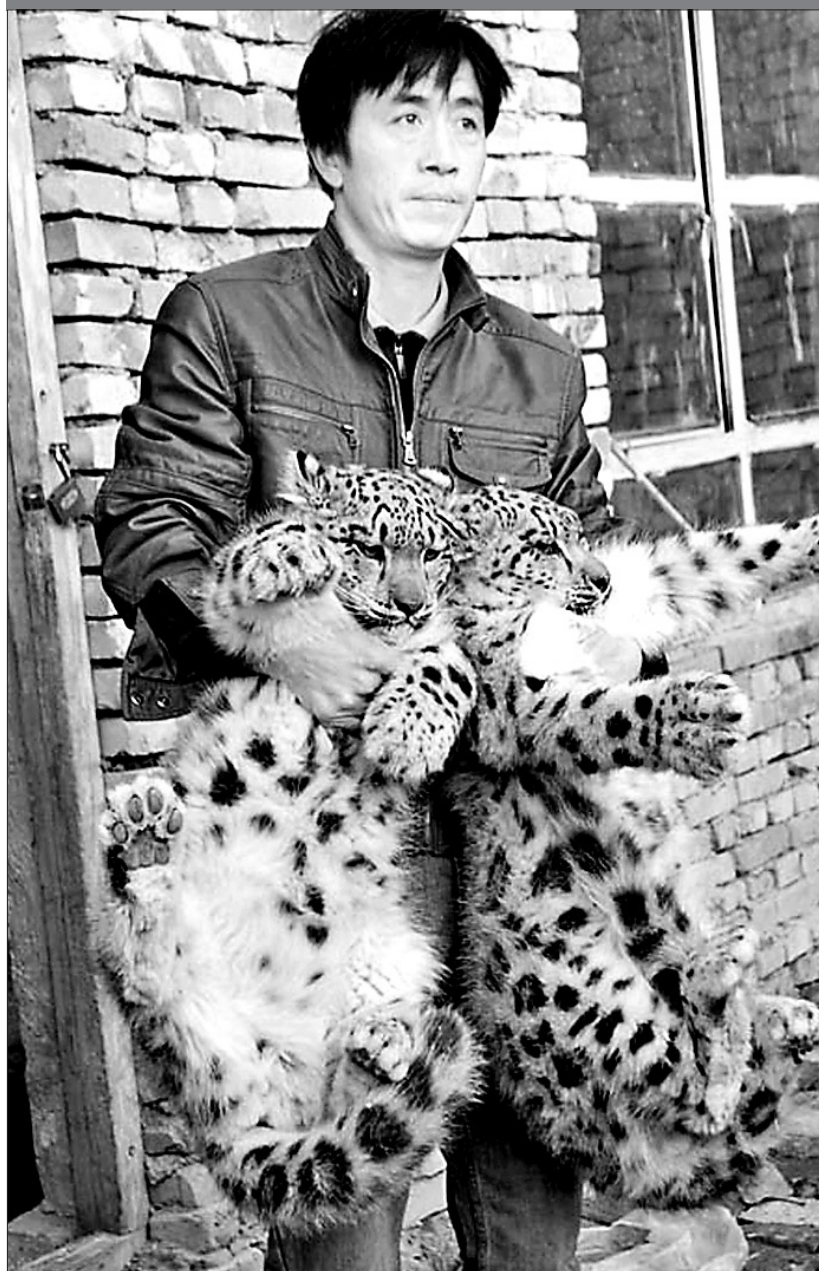
Ma quoted studies by many zoologists who spent years in the mountains studying the habitat of the snow leopard. "Few of them have ever seen a snow leopard - even once," Ma said. He said the cat is too rare to simply stumble on, and that Zhang's story could not withstand critical thinking.

Regarding Zhang's claim that he mis-

By Zheng Lu

The snow leopard is an endangered species that lives at the snowline in the mountains of central Asia. Its secretive whereabouts and legions of poachers have made them rare to see in the wild. While it is as endangered as the panda, it has remained outside the public eye.

That was until twins were found in a herdsman's house. While there are no records of people saving and raising a wild snow leopard, the man did it. The question is whether he is a hero or a publicity seeker.



Zhang Peiwei holds the terrible two, uncertain about their, and his, future.

Photos provided by WLMQWB.com

took the babies for wild cats, Ma said it was unlikely. He said even baby snow leopards look entirely different from common cat. "It was an excuse. I am sure he knew they were snow leopards from the very beginning," Ma said.

He accused Zhang of poaching the mother leopard for herself, or of stumbling on the leftovers from an expedition by fellow poachers.

According to the Law on the Protection of Wildlife, poaching carries a penalty of 10 years imprisonment. "Zhang should be investigated," Ma said, though he admitted that the lack of hard evidence would make a conclusive verdict impossible.

More trouble than imagined

Rather than follow in the footsteps of the Shaanxi Forestry Department, which called for government money as soon as the South China tiger story broke, the Xin-

jiang bureau kept a lid on the issue.

Though it identified the two leopards in July, officials decided to leave them with Zhang until they came up with an idea for how to deal with the cats. However, the law stipulates that private residences cannot be used to keep protected wild animals.

The official formerly told the media that the local Wildlife Protection Center was not equipped to care for and raise a snow leopard, and that it could not afford it.

Zhang said that during the last six months, the leopards have eaten 900 chickens and a dozen sheep. "Fortunately, my family breeds livestock so I do not have to buy them food on the market. Otherwise, their food bill would be several thousand yuan a month," Zhang said. He said his family could, at best, support the cats for another year or two.

Zhang confessed that he had thought about selling the leopards, "but only before



The snow leopards weigh 32 kilograms.

I knew [what they were]," Zhang said. "I am honored that I am the first person in the world to raise a snow leopard at home."

The past two weeks, visitors have flocked to Zhang's house to see the cats. Media reports said the snow leopards were frightened by the crowds and had become less active. The local government appointed guards to keep watch at Zhang's house and set up surveillance monitors in the leopards' room.

Shi Jun, vice director of Wildlife Conservation Division of Forestry Bureau of Xinjiang, has asked people not to visit.

Zhang invited *Beijing Today's* reporters to see the leopards. He said few people have seen wild snow leopards, and it would be a good chance for people to observe them close up.

However, despite his optimism, the growing snow leopards have become an obvious burden to their keeper.

"He has only himself to blame," Ma said. "For his own fame, he deprived these cats of the best time for them to learn from their mother how to survive in the wild," Ma said. Since the leopards are six months old and have never seen an adult leopard since their birth, they have forever lost their opportunity to live in the wild.

"They have been sentenced a lifetime imprisonment at the zoo and dependence on humans," Ma said.

Today, the habitats of snow leopards are far apart from each other. "Many snow leopards cannot find a suitable mate, so their descendants are weakening as a result of intermarriage. They could become extinct at any time," Ma said.

Zhang said he had not considered the leopards' parents. "I just wanted to give the poor little things a home," he said.

Though the cats made him famous overnight, Zhang said he feels ever more pressure. "The whole country has turned its focus to me, so now I am under more pressure than ever to do a good job caring for the snow leopards," he said.

Since the report, many animal protection departments have visited the leopards. Zhang said one of them will take over their care. "The official promised to give me some subsidy for my many months of taking care of the little leopards," Zhang said. He has refused donations from readers.

Ma said people should not take home wild animals, even babies, because wildlife always learns how to adapt to the natural environment. "To keep a wild animal at home is not to save it, but to kill its nature," Ma said.

Ma mentioned the damaging relationship people on the mountain have had with its wildlife. He said he hated poachers, especially those who shield themselves as wildlife protectors. Although the law is strict, it can hardly be enforced due to a lack of supervision, Ma said.

He said he is most upset by herdsman who hunt wild animals. "The reality is that the price of lamb and chicken is so high that residents cannot afford it, but wild meat is free," Ma said.

A new home in stone?

The Ili Wildlife Protection Center has stated it will receive the snow leopards from Zhang, and preparations are being made for their transport.

The new home will provide the animals with fresh meat and veterinary care, but they will be transported ever farther from their birthplace on Tianshan.

Pull the plug or profit? The blog question

By Wang Yu

Is the blog dead? It seems there has been an exodus of bloggers to online communities, and those just looking for an outlet are turning to Twitter. But some are using blogging as an alternative business. Their focus on small groups is discovering new possibilities for the blog.

Paul Boutin, a correspondent for the Silicon Valley rage Valleywag, said in a *Wired* magazine article that people considering launching their own blog should bail out: existing bloggers should quit.

"Writing a blog today is not the bright idea it was four years ago. The blogosphere, once a freshwater oasis of folksy self expression and clever thought, has been flooded by a tsunami of paid bilge," Boutin wrote in the article.

The phenomenon is by no means limited to the US. In China, blogging has lost its individuality and the voice of netizens is flooded out by experts and popular figures. But as managers of what enthusiasts once called individual media, many bloggers are looking for a new way to profit from their work.

Failed ad models

The first blog service provider in China was BlogChina, which started in August 2002 and then changed its name to Bokee.

2005 was year of the Chinese blog: every netizen had to have his or her own. Portal sites like Sina.com and Sohu also started blog services, and their value was anticipated to be the focus of the next year's business.

As of June, statistics from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows there are 10.7 million bloggers in the country, or 42.3 percent of all Internet users. About 7 million of these bloggers update frequently.

Though SNS (Social Networking Services) sites such as Facebook, Xiaonei and Kaixin001.com have taken the Net by storm, the blog remains an essential part of everyday cyber life.

Professional blogs such as The Huffington Post and Engadget top the list at Technorati, a search engine for blogs. Most adopt traditional methods of integrating advertising links into their content.

"It is the only way to turn a profit, and we are trying our best to make every article objective," said the editor of the Chinese edition of Engadget.

In November 2005, China's first blog advertisement deal was inked by Hexun and Hongbo, the former editor in chief of DoNews. Google's AdSense followed in September 2006. Bloggers can enroll in this program to enable text, image, and more recently, video advertisements on their Web sites. These advertisements are administered by Google and generate revenue on either a per-click or per-impression basis.

But Boutin said chasing profits is precisely what made the blogosphere impersonal.

Traditional advertising methods required bloggers to write for the masses, or to give up part of their unique characters. "I will



Zhou Yi works in his apartment as a full-time blogger.

Photo by Wang Yu

remove all Google AdSense blocks because I don't want to write worthless article or paste pictures of hot bodies just to attract more readers," the blogger of Awflasher wrote.

Cultivating spenders

When Sina.com started its blog service, it invited popular stars and celebrities to join the ranks of its bloggers. The celebrity influence helped the site's new department build a strong reputation in a short time. Adding sensational topics to these blogs was the site's tactic to expand its reach.

But not every blogger can be a celebrity, and even those who are cannot convert their reputations into a successful business.

Xu Jinglei, a famous Chinese actress and director whose blog once topped Technorati's list, published a disaster example of the "blog book."

It is the articles, pictures and videos on a blog that generate value. As a form of media, the content offered to readers is always the most important.

Zhou Yi, founder of the design and gadget blog Ixiqu.com, used

to work in an IT company before starting the blog in July 2007. "As a huge fan of those interesting gadgets, I first wrote my blog just for fun," he said. Zhou led the team of authors and kept updating the blog every day, and it soon became very popular with gadget lovers.

"I decided to quit my job and start the Ixiqu online store, which sells some products mentioned in the articles," Zhou Yi said. The blog's good reputation has made the store a success.

"My monthly income is five times what I used to make and I love the home office life," Zhou added.

Ixiqu covers all the four elements of marketing: production, price, placement and promotion. "We are doing our best to make our articles interesting and offer detailed information about the products. That keeps with our blog's style and creates revenue by inspiring readers to spend on the products in our store," Zhou said.

Focus on the small groups

If Zhou Yi pinned his hopes on blog advertisements as others have before, his results would have been totally different. Ixiqu.com attracts about 1,000 page views per day on average, which is a turn-off for number-hungry advertisers.

"Our readership is steady, and shared interests bring them together on our blog. Furthermore, many of the readers work in the media, and they are opinion makers. This makes our page views more valuable, even though the count is small," Zhou said.

Micromu.com also sees the importance of small groups. It is operated as an independent music label by a consulting company.

"Publishing music is very hard in China, especially for underground musicians. They have a steady audience, but the musicians need money to continue their careers. On the other hand, some brands are looking for more precise marketing methods," said Ed Peto, who is in charge of the company.

The label focuses on folk music. Blogger Shi Lei's job is to choose the artists, post on the blog and organize shows. The project is backed by Dominic Johnson-Hill's Plastered T-Shirts and Beyerdynamic audio equipment company. It has recorded and released online nine albums, all of which are free to download. A portion of the sponsorship money goes to the musician.

"Every album has been downloaded hundreds of times, and our total page views since June has reached 100,000. For an alternative media, that number is not bad," Shi Lei said.

Platform of various interests

Micromu.com is a place where musicians can promote their music

and earn a reward, where the sponsor can market more precisely and where the blog continues to grow.

Ixiqu.com's fame has led designers and manufacturers to go to the site on their own. "Many designers contact me and want to show their works on my blog," Zhou Yi said. "The interesting thing is that they always communicate with the readers by posting comments under the article."

He said he thinks the blog can be a good tool to help the young designer.

"When a product is in its final phase, manufacturers and designers cannot usually see the project objectively. Ixiqu can be such a platform where they can collect feedback from end users," he said.

Future plans and problems

"Chinese brands have not realized the value of the small group," Ed Peto said, noting it was a challenge to source sponsors for MicroMu.



Most of the albums released by MicroMu are live recordings.

Another problem is how to attract readers. "That's why I chose folk music. It tells the everyday life around us and the stories of these songs can touch more people," he said.

Ixiqu.com is growing steadily and does not need to worry about its audience size. Its success has spawned a number of copycat sites.

"I hope to find more international channels to enrich the online store's product list. Some professional writers may join the team to give the blog a more authoritative voice and get more designers involved," Zhou said.

Many international record labels are watching MicroMu's development very closely.

"The music industry in the West is crumbling, so many music labels want to find opportunity here. While the traditional method is not doing well here either, they see hope in MicroMu," Ed Peto said.

Internet cafes switch to Chinese OS

Requirements that Internet cafes in a southern Chinese city install Chinese-developed operating systems (OS) are raising new concerns, a US government-funded radio station reported Wednesday.

The new rules that went into effect November 5 are aimed at cracking down on the use of pirated software, said Hu Shenghua, a spokesman for the Culture Bureau in the city of Nanchang, Jiangxi Province.

Internet cafe operators are required to remove unlicensed software and replace it with legitimate copies of either Microsoft Windows or China's homegrown Red Flag Linux OS while paying a fee, he said.

Some reports, however, said cafes were being required to install Red Flag Linux even if they were using authorized copies of Windows. It quoted Xiao Qiang, director of the California-based China Internet Project, as saying the new rules would help authorities regulate Internet cafes that now operate on the margins of the law, and allow them to undertake heightened surveillance.

People who access the Web at Internet cafes are already required to register with their identification cards. The Web within China is regularly patrolled by specially trained monitors looking for content deemed politically subversive or related to gambling, pornography or illegal business dealings.

A woman reached by phone at Nanchang's Junlin Internet Cafe said officials came last month to replace the pirated software they were using. The woman, who gave only her surname, Wang, declined to identify the new operating system but said the new regulations had increased costs "dramatically," while customers had been pleased by the improved performance.

Fan Hongguan, a spokesman for Beijing-based Red Flag Software, said the company had been marketing a version of the OS with chat functions to Internet cafes for three years. Fan declined to comment on the surveillance allegations.

(Agencies)



A group of young internet users in Beijing surf and play games online. The government requires them to register with an ID and net cafes to use licensed softwares.

CFP Photo

Fall in foreign tourists this year

(AFP) – The number of foreign tourists fell in the first 10 months of the year and the global economic crisis was expected to make things worse next year, authorities said in comments published Wednesday.

The number of overseas visitors staying overnight – a useful measure for the tourism industry – between January and October fell 1.9 percent year-on-year, *China Daily* reported.

The report, citing Shao Qiwei, head of the National Tourism Administration, said the trend was expected to continue in next year.

"Foreign visitor arrivals are sure to decline next year as a result of the global economic slowdown, so we must focus our efforts on stimulating domestic demand," he said.

The domestic tourism market remained strong, and the outbound sector – the number of Chinese people going abroad – was up 14 percent in the first 10 months.

Police to dispatch anti-terror liaisons

(AP) – The government plans to send additional police liaisons to countries facing major terror threats in a bid to boost cooperation with local security forces and head-off attacks, the Public Security Ministry said Wednesday.

The move adds to more aggressive tactics against terror threats, particularly those from terrorists battling for an independent Muslim homeland in the far western Xinjiang Region.

Officials say they foiled a series of planned attacks this year, some targeting the Beijing Olympics. While terror experts say the likelihood of a successful attack is low, intelligence gathering, especially abroad, is seen as Beijing's biggest weakness in combating such threats.

An announcement on the ministry's Web site said police officers already posted abroad have played a key role in heading off attacks on Chinese diplomatic missions and financial institutions. The notice did not give the names of countries where attacks had been foiled or provide other details.

Without naming specific nations, the ministry said police officers would be dispatched to countries where "anti-terrorism tasks are relatively heavier."

Separately, it said a police unit would be sent to Australia and other countries that are home to large numbers of Chinese students and immigrants.

The announcement, dated Tuesday, follows on the heels of the terrorist attacks in neighboring India. No Chinese were reported killed or injured in the attacks, blamed by India on Pakistan-based Islamic militants.

Expert view

By Huang Daohen

Software piracy is widespread and the move may be the start of curbing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) violations in Internet cafes, Li Rui, an engineer of Chinese portal mop.com, said.

Even if users do not install pirated software, computer manufacturers and retailers often preload pirated software on computers and servers instead of legitimate versions, Li said.

The Business Software Alliance, a trade group established to fight software piracy, estimated that the rate of software piracy here was 82 percent in 2007, the most recent figure available.

There may be complaints from Internet cafe owners over charges for using legitimate OS, but the test-run in Nanchang can be seen as a sign of government crackdown on software piracy and IPR cases in Internet cafes, Li said.

"There will be setbacks as I learned the owners are forced to install Red Flag Linux even if they are already using authorized copies of Windows," he said, "But the anti-piracy campaign needs time."

Besides, copyright infringement by Internet cafes has become a new phenomenon in IPR cases, Li said.

Data shows the number of Internet users in China has surpassed 230 mil-

lion. One-third of them surf at Internet cafes, where a majority watch movies.

Li said infringements by Internet cafes usually occur in two ways. Some outlets download movies without authorization – this infringement is obvious – while others sign movie service agreements with suppliers who claim to have obtained copyright authorization.

"However, this does not absolve the cafes as they have to show proof of copyright agreement," Li said.

He said Internet cafes should always check every film provided by their suppliers for genuine copyright agreements.

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Is the yuan depreciating?

By Huang Daohen

The yuan fell to its lowest value this week since its peg to the US dollar was lifted in 2005 amid dispute over whether it will begin to depreciate.

It dropped visibly in the first three days of this week to 6.85 against the US dollar, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trading System.

The reference rate, based on a weighted average of market makers' price inquiries, gained 25 basis points on Wednesday to 6.8527 yuan per US dollar. It sparked speculation that authorities were shifting policy on the exchange rate to help the economic slump, and about whether depreciation will lead to large-scale capital outflow.

Should yuan depreciate?

Analysts said the yuan's steep

fall this week will help promote export growth, and many called for a shift in exchange rate policy. But Zhao Xiao, economics professor at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, said the government has limited power to keep the yuan from depreciating in the coming year.

Zhao said the latest move cannot be taken as a change in foreign exchange policy. "The depreciation could also lead to a round of competitive devaluation in neighboring economies, which would result in few material gains for China," he said.

The main problem facing the export industry is not price, but weakened external demand, Zhao said. The exchange rate has little or no effect when there is no demand, he added.

There are also some wording changes in the third quarter monetary policy report by the People's Bank of China, the central bank. Instead of emphasizing that the exchange reform should be "positive, gradual, and controllable," it only declared it would "maintain a basically stable yuan rate, improve foreign exchange management and keep gross balance."

The central bank said in a recent statement that the yuan is not approaching a depreciation period.

Worries over capital outflow

Unlike the Ministry of Commerce and analysts who tend to promote export growth and employment via yuan depreciation, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) worries

about large-scale capital outflow caused by yuan depreciation.

In order to reinforce capital controls, the SAFE and the State Administration of Taxation are requiring overseas payments of qualified service trade, income, current transfer and some capital accounts over US\$30,000 (206,500 yuan) to go with tax certification.

SAFE said detailed accounts include service trade income gained domestically by overseas institutions or individuals, compensation gained by overseas individuals and income gained by overseas institutions or individuals such as dividends, bonus, profit, interest of direct debt.

As risk of uncontrolled capital outflow is thought to be increasing, this measure helps to reinforce capital control, Zhao said.

Company opens the door to foreign cards

By He Jianwei

Some 4,000 new merchants in four cities have begun to accept all major credit cards for transactions using the new Merchant Solutions payment solutions, Sean Hesh, CEO and managing director of the alliance between First Data and Standard Chartered Bank, said last Thursday.

Merchant Solutions offers a range of payment services to merchants operating in Bangladesh, Brunei, Hong Kong, India, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and on the Chinese mainland.

The company opened offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen last year. It targets enterprises catering to foreign tourists, but Hesh said he aims to help smaller businesses get a share of the tourism trade. "When foreign tourists come to China, they can pay by credit card not just in hotels, but in shopping malls, restaurants and cafes."

The company offers its merchant clients electronic payment and online transaction processing solutions to enable credit and debit acceptance, pre-paid and gift card processing, installment payments, currency conversion and contact-less payment options.

"These services can reduce the time spent handling payment and make the processing of payment more secure," he said. The time saved on payment leaves more for sales.

The system accepts all major international credit cards, as well as cards issued by American Express, Diners and JCB (Japan Credit Bureau).

Although the global market is slowing down, Hesh said he sees little impact on the Chinese mainland. "If people spend less, transactions will go down - but we do not see any slowdown in the market. Transaction volume is one consideration, but the more important [factor] is the total value people spend," he said.

Hesh said the market is in a cycle. "The economy may be shrinking, but in the future it will improve," he said.

Merchant Solutions will invest more on the Chinese mainland next year, he said.

"We are evaluating a number of second and third-tier cities such as Dalian, Chengdu, Xiamen, and our target will be 7,500 to 10,000 merchants within a year," he said.

US properties attractive to more Chinese

By Annie Wei

Interest in US commercial property is not just for the wealthy, but also the emerging middle class.

Soufun, a leading housing Web site, announced it will organize a group of 30 people for a property tour to the US next month. The trip is scheduled for 10 days, and participants will visit properties in three cities: Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas. The properties they will visit are having mortgaging problems under the credit crisis with prices ranging US \$40,000 -100,000 (250,000 - 750,000 yuan).

Soufun said half the tour members were interested in buying property in the US for their children to study abroad in the future.

Yuan Lixin, an industry observer from the Beijing Youth Daily Group said the US property market was alluring to the well-off, but that Soufun's action seemed too rushed.

There are other things to consider when targeting well-off consumers: first of all, the government has tightened controls on the outflow of personal assets from the country.

Will the government allow so much individual money to exit? Although there is no clear law or regulation, Yuan said Soufun's trip could test the authorities' attitude.

Yuan said although the US property market has bottomed



The reduced cost of US real estate is a new investment area for Chinese.

Xinhua Photo

out, average to just middle-income Chinese families have no interest in it. The overseas property market should target consumers who are upper middle class and who have extra money to invest or spend. The 250,000 to 700,000 yuan properties in the US are much cheaper than in Beijing or Shanghai, he said.

The market trend is still very positive. There are many immigrants to the US every year, especially children of increas-

ingly well-off Chinese families. "To some rich investors, saying 'having a property in the US' is sort of social status," Jerry Tsang, marketing manager of Atlantic Windham Group in Shanghai, said. Atlantic Windham is currently the only registered US real estate company in China. Other foreign companies interested in attracting Chinese customers are setting up offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

The company has started touring in cities like Shanghai, Wenzhou and Suzhou on the weekend, with 50-100 attendees each session. "We plan to increase the group's size up to 500 attendees each session next year," Tsang said.

"The market has great potential but buying property is very different from other products. Customers need to talk to you several times before they can make a decision," Tsang said.

Beijing wants affordable appliances for the countryside

By Zhao Hongyi

To stimulate domestic consumption, the government is calling on electric appliance manufacturers, both domestic and foreign, to produce reliable goods at low prices to sell in the countryside market.

There are 200 million families in rural areas, which means a market scale of 200 million sets of each appliance. The total market is estimated to be 920 billion yuan.

The central government began trial promotions years ago in a

dozen provinces like Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia. The trial promotion will expand to more provinces over the next four years.

The government promised to subsidize 13 percent of the prices of the goods sold and imposed ceilings for each category. Aside from domestic brands, officials invited Motorola, Nokia, Samsung, Siemens and LG to join.

Siemens has been active in the appliance market and will list its series products under a new brand for the countryside. Its global

market vice president, Jean Dufour, met leaders from Suning Home Appliance, one of the country's top appliance vendors.

"We expect to use this opportunity to expand our market share," Dufour told local media this week in Nanjing, Jiangsu. Siemens prices its products between 2,000-3,000 yuan average.

Motorola and Nokia have also prepared mobile phones at the average price of 200 yuan.

"Foreign brands have promised to provide reliable and high quality products and low prices,

which has a great draw in the rural area," said Wu Bing, senior marketing manager from Suning Home Appliance Chain Store.

Domestic brands, including Haier, HiSense, Changhong, Skyworth and TCL, are more active in the rural market, as have those on disappearing for years in cities like Genren, KEG, Huari, Lamo and Feilu.

"Domestic brands are more competitive, and we will see a fierce competition in the rural market," an official from the Ministry of Commerce said.



The vast rural market has more than 800 million consumers.

CFP Photo

Earthquake memorial or tourist attraction?



The extremely damaging earthquake on May 12 this year is worthy of memorial. Photos by Wang Jinqian and Tang Cheng

By Zhao Hongyi

Six months after the May 12 earthquake in Sichuan Province, local government officials and residents are busy designing earthquake museums, markers and ruin parks, which are aimed at boosting local tourism.

Soon after the quake, the central government spoke about building earthquake museums to remind people of the disaster. Under the initiative, which has a price tag of 2 billion yuan, museums will be built in Wenchuan, Beichuan, Hanwang and Hongkou counties. The plan is expected to be approved by year-end.

"Because of the tremendous damage, the museums will be unlike any in the world," Peng Jinchuan, senior engineer at the Sichuan Earthquake Authority, said.

Other disaster-hit cities, like Dujiangyan, Pengzhou, Mianzu, Maoxian, have shown interest in building their own memorial museums or markers, no matter whether funding will come from the central government or from local residents. They have their eyes on the same goal: to attract tourists and boost the local economy.

During the National Day holiday in October, Chengdu opened two tourist routes that went through city areas hit hardest by the quake. Qingchuan, a small county, has opened a ruins park on November 11 to bring in more tourists.

The plans have had some success. In Qingchuan, 2,000 visitors have been to the park to pay respect to the earthquake victims, "which has stimulated the sale of flowers, food and souvenirs, and brought about the opening of 50 hotels in the area," Shen Xingna, the county's tourism director, told reporters. The local government has already recovered its initial investment of 3 million yuan.

Some counties want to go further than building museums, markers or parks – they plan to apply to the UN for natural and cultural heritage status.

"We should find a large piece of land which has suffered the most serious damage, for instance Beichuan county, build a park or museum there, and apply to UNESCO for the status – just like ancient Pompeii in Italy," Zhang Tinghao, president of the Cultural Heritage Research Institute of China, said.

Beichuan is developing for tourists Tangjiashan Lake, which was created following the May earthquake. The county plans to package the lake with an earthquake memorial, which they will submit for consideration as a national heritage site.

地震遗址游能走多远?



Using the damage to develop local tourism is worth discussing.



It takes huge investment to build so many museums and ruin sites for tourism.

Comment

The earthquake brought great damage, yet also unparalleled heroism. It's like the two sides of a coin.

It's not wrong to turn the ruins into tourist attractions. The critical thing here is how they're going to be developed in future.

– Xi Yuming, reporter, Beijing Youth Daily

Museums and parks are to remind people of the disaster, a place for people to show their respect to the victims, to stimulate more scientific research on natural disaster and as a place for researchers to conduct studies.

– Li Yaoshen, deputy director, Department of Museums, State Administration of Cultural Heritage

Tourism is an easy way to rebuild the local economy. But it is not right that all earthquake-hit counties and cities set up museums and parks. Since the central government has already initiated these plans, why doesn't the local government come up with more creative ideas to develop the local economy?

– Wang Haodong, a netizen

In this way, the local government has an excuse to use taxes to conduct feasibility studies on building museums and the like. They will also use taxes to build the museums and parks. Why don't they use the money to rescue the victims?

– He Liangwei, a social study scholar and observer

Music copy right fees, to take or not?

By Zhao Hongyi

Beginning this week, over 200 hotels in Kunming, Yunnan Province, have stopped playing ambient music in their lobbies. They complain that fees charged by the Music Copyright Society of China's local office are too high.

On September 22, the local branch of the society started collecting fees from the hotels at a rate of 1.75 yuan per month for each bed the hotels have.

"A hotel feels dull if no music is played in its lobby," Lu Hua, public relations officer of the Jiahua Hotel, said. His hotel has already hired pianists to play in its lobby.

Zhao Gang of the Cuihu Hotel said background music is not important, but admitted his hotel is looking for alternatives.

Meanwhile, hotel guests are complaining about the lack of music and are hoping they will be given a discount on room rates.

Analysts say hotels should not be charged because their use of music is to create a relaxing atmosphere; they do not earn direct revenue from it. Others are suspicious of the Music Copyright Society's legal rights to collect fees.

Comment

We collect fees based on the Copyright Law, which defines the commercial use of music based on whether it's used publicly, rather than whether it earns revenue. We have a transparent record of the fees charged. Twenty percent goes to our daily operations and management, while 80 percent goes back to copyright holders.

– Zhang Yanhui, director, Music Copyright Society of China, Yunnan Branch

The dispute has greatly damaged hotel operations. We are looking for music that we can use, ones not included in the 14 million pieces under the society's copyright protection. We are also thinking of installing more TV sets that will be tuned in to CCTV music channels, or we'll invite bands to play in hotel lobbies.

– Yang Liang, Kunming Association of Hotels and Restaurants

We have a lot of work to do. We will be informing business entities such as restaurants, hotels, shopping malls, airports, airlines, railways and exhibition centers of the charges we will impose for public use of our music.

Establishments in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have started paying the fees for the use of ambient music. Some big shopping malls in Kunming have also paid up. If the hotels insist on defying regulations, we'll file a lawsuit against them.

– Fan Li'ang, Music Copyright Society of China

Most hotels in Beijing are aware of the regulation. But since they have not yet received any formal notice, they are still playing ambient music in their lobbies as usual.

– Sun Ruqian, Di Dongna, Metropolitan Times



Charging the hotels for the use of music in their lobbies is not a problem now. But how to implement the regulation is still a question.

CFP Photo

British monk giving new fame to Shaolin kung fu

By Han Manman

Matthew Ahmet was an ordinary teenager from north London four years ago. But after he graduated from high school, he chose a path less taken – he decided to become a Shaolin monk.

Wanting to become a kung fu master like his idol Bruce Lee, Ahmet gave up the carefree life of a young man and entered a world of training, discipline and punishment.

After years of hard work, his dream to become a “master” has come true. He is one of the “kung fu stars” in a popular group of performing Shaolin monks, who are on a world tour that included a show in his hometown.

Kung fu show in London

Although the UK leg of the tour ended last week, 20-year-old Ahmet still remembers the excitement. “All of my friends, my parents, even people I don’t know who saw me on TV came backstage to say I did well. They said seeing a Westerner (doing kung fu) on stage made them feel inspired that their dreams can also come true,” he said.

Ahmet denied he was chosen to perform because he is the only foreigner in the Shaolin temple, located in Henan Province. He said it was his skill that became his ticket into the group. “I am at a high level, like most masters on the team.”

Life in the Shaolin temple

Ahmet’s visit to London seemed to have taken him full circle. His transformation from an ordinary boy into a monk began nine years ago, when Shaolin monks staged a martial arts show in London.

“At that time, I liked Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li. But nothing prepared me for what I saw! A monk did a handstand, supporting his weight with just two fingers.” The then 11-year-old Ahmet whispered to himself, “I want to be that strong.” And his dream was born.



Matthew Ahmet dreams to be a kung fu master.

Photo provided by Matthew Ahmet

He began to train at a small local martial arts club. As his skill improved, he started working with a private teacher at 5 am every day, before going to school. At 16, Ahmet went to the famed Shaolin Temple with the help of his London teacher, who had links with the Shaolin monks.

“Every day we’d wake up at 5 am and train throughout the day until around 9 pm. We’d do stretching, fighting exercises and practice kung fu forms,” he said.

“The first few weeks were incredibly painful and lonely for me. I wasn’t able to ring my mum and I lost over a stone (6.35 kilograms) in weight. But my pride kept me going. I didn’t want to admit defeat, and I also saw children aged

four to five training alongside me, doing the same punishing exercises,” he said. “If they could do it, then so could I. Finally, after about a month, I learned to carry on through the pain, and to conquer it.”

Ahmet has himself become a kung fu coach at the temple, teaching around 30 students. “Most of my students are Chinese, then there’s the odd westerner for a week or so throughout the year,” he said.

During his UK tour, Ahmet also visited schools to talk about Buddhism and being a monk. “I want to teach kids that they can be cool without being violent,” he said. “As a Shaolin disciple, I’ve learned kung fu ... but helping others and spreading happiness is

an important goal in my life.”

When asked if he has even once regretted the decision to give up a life in Britain to become a monk, Ahmet said: “I’ve never regretted the decision to go to Shaolin. It’s a dream come true!”

Finding true love

It was also at the Shaolin temple that Ahmet met the love of his life. He is marrying Chang Chunyan, a 20-year-old student, on January 25 – his parents’ wedding anniversary. The temple has allowed him to get married because he is classified as a *sujiadizi*, a person who has trained at the monastery, but who is not a Buddhist cleric.

“Chang is the love of my life and we have been together for more than two years. She is also

pregnant with our first baby and I can’t wait for the child to be born,” he said.

Ahmet will be traveling to Los Angeles next week for the US leg of their world tour. “Chang will come with me. Many of my mother’s relatives live in LA, so they can all meet my future wife,” he said.

While Ahmet is excited to have a family with his fiancée, he also wants to continue being a “kung fu” ambassador. In the process, he may even get a chance to work with his movie idols.

“Hopefully, I could work with some of my martial arts idols like Jackie Chan. Since all my dreams have come true so far, I can’t see why these dreams can’t come true either,” he said.

Japanese organic farming boss gets green card

By Jackie Zhang

Although Kaito Hiroyuki’s family has a forest farm and an animal pasture in his hometown in Japan, he has dedicated himself to his organic food company in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. Last month, Kaito finally received his Chinese green card, foreigners’ permanent residence card, which made him feel like a true Sichuanese.

Kaito is the first foreigner in Sichuan to get a green card for work reasons since the policy was implemented in 2004. He is excited about his new legal status in the country. “The green card has made my life simpler. I don’t need to take my passport along with me everywhere anymore or go through the process of renewing my visa.”

Kaito’s life in China began in 1994. His first job had nothing to do with organic food, rather it dealt with cosmetics. In 2000, his employer, Xiangzhen Cosmetics



Kaito (fourth from right) often comes to the production base and discusses organic food planting with farmers.

Photo provided by Hao Jinjiang

Company, closed shop. Kaito and his wife, Hao Jinjiang, a Chengdu native, decided to buy the company.

He redirected the company’s business into organic food, an industry that was already developed in Japan, but was in its infancy here. He knows the agriculture industry well, since it is his family’s business in Japan. “To run

an organic food company, you have to be prepared to go for three years without a profit,” he said. “You have to turn your land into an organic food production base. During the first three years, we plant using organic food methods but none of the produce can be sold as qualified organic food. It is a period of time of lost money.”

To find the right farmland for his company, Kaito traveled to remote places. “People in remote places don’t use fertilizers or pesticides. The lands is in its natural state, untouched,” he said.

Kaito also saw how poor rural folk were, and how he could form a mutually beneficial relationship with them. “I invited them to plant

for my company. The company pays for their land and products, and also gives them opportunities to undergo skills training,” he said. “As a result, we can harvest organic food in clean land, and the people can earn more money to improve their life.” Kaito said that although some of villagers had difficulty learning new skills and dealing with new technology at first, they were eager to learn and even asked their children to learn as well.

In addition to organic food, Kaito’s company also produces ingredients for traditional Chinese medicine. Most of his organic food products are exported to Japan. Some are sold to Ito-Yokado, a leading Japanese retailer with stores in China. “The market for organic food is bigger in Japan, so that’s where my company’s emphasis is right now. But we are planning to expand the organic food business in China in the near future,” he said.

US Agriculture Secretary promotes biotechnology, free trade

By Venus Lee

The US Secretary of Agriculture, who is in Beijing for the US-China Strategic Economic Dialogue, said Wednesday that the melamine issue was not on the agenda for his talks with Chinese officials. Edward Schafer told reporters he is confident of Chinese food security and that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will share with Chinese agencies its experience in food security management and supervision.

China has become the US's fourth largest trading partner in agricultural products, next to Canada, Mexico and the EU. "Both

countries (The US and China) are the two biggest agricultural economies which share more than US \$20 billion (137 billion yuan) in bilateral agricultural trade volume. So cooperation between the two sides is very important," Schafer told reporters.

The secretary said technological advancements, such as biotechnology, play a key role in agricultural development. "Biotechnology is one of the most promising tools for improving the productivity of agriculture and increasing the income of the rural poor," he said. "US scientists will work together with their Chinese counterparts to

develop more bioproducts that are suitable to China's agricultural environment."

He said intellectual property rights are important in developing agricultural technology because of the enormous amount of time and money involved during research. Therefore, the creation of laws and regulations to support intellectual property rights are imperative to creating a positive environment for investors. "The government can't control each detail when it comes to food security. Emphasis should be put on taking precautions, so we should develop a scientific, transparent and normative

system to assure the market," Schafer said.

He also emphasized the importance of a free market in agricultural products. The US wants big emerging economies like China, Brazil and India to remove barriers to imports. But these countries argue that the US and other developed nations are not doing enough to free up their markets for food, or to end the trade distortion that squeezes out of the world market farmers from the developing world.

The fifth round of talks in the US-China Strategic Economic Dialogue is scheduled from December 4 to 5.

"Red Scarf Project" combats AIDS misconceptions

By Han Manman

To mark the 20th World AIDS Day on Monday, the city launched the "Red Scarf Project" to raise awareness of the disease and combat misconceptions about HIV/AIDS patients.

The project, which was sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF and Marie Stopes International (MSI), an international non-government organization working in the area of sexual and reproductive health, kicked off with an exhibition at the 798 Art District last Friday.

The exhibit, held at the Yuanfen New Media Art Space, featured five large, hand-knitted and decorated red scarves; videos and animations talking about AIDS affected populations: women, young people, farmers, minorities and homosexuals.

"The exhibition is an excellent demonstration of the powerful impact collaboration between artists and charities can have on the response to AIDS," Lily Liu, director of MSI China, said. "The works provide a unique opportunity to highlight the stigma faced by HIV patients by challenging our conceptions of the word 'Virus'."

"The meaning of the project is just like what the exhibition shows: Our lives are like the yarn of the scarf, all knitted together," David Ben Kay, curator of the exhibition, said. The scarves were made by at least 10 women who are suffering from HIV, Kay said.

"Despite progress in recent years, there remains an urgent need to strengthen the general population's knowledge, awareness, and understanding of HIV and those living with the virus," Subinay Nandy, director of UNDP in China, said.

He said the "Red Scarf Project" is a perpetual living work which aims to help reduce stigma associated with HIV and AIDS.

The number of adults worldwide living with HIV has leveled off since 2000, according to UNAIDS. In Beijing, statistics show 755 newly diagnosed HIV cases this year, down 22.4 percent year-on-year.

As of last month, the city has registered 5,635 HIV/AIDS patients, of whom 219 were foreigners, 1,184 local residents and 4,232 people from other parts of China, according to a report on Beijing's AIDS prevention work released by the local health bureau last week.

Int'l foundations help Yunnan biodiversity conservation



People in northwest Yunnan have changed their life by using solar equipment.

Photo by Li Jia

By Han Manman

Nature Conservancy (NC), a global conservation group based in the US, Tuesday launched a project in Beijing to help Yunnan Province establish a new conservation mechanism.

The project, named "Biodiversity Conservation in Northwest Yunnan," aims to preserve the southwestern province's ecosystem and rich local culture. Three counties in the Meili Mountain area and 10 villages in four counties in the Laojun mountain area will be involved in the five-year project, said Zhang Shuang, China representative of

NC, adding that 20,000 villagers will be part of the effort.

"The project aims to promote the use of alternative energy, and raise awareness of biodiversity conservation and sustainable economic development," Zhang said.

The project will promote ecotourism to preserve endangered local species. It will also establish a management team to raise environmental protection awareness in local communities.

"Yunnan features outstanding natural resources with very rich biodiversity," Wu Mingde, representative and deputy secretary-general of the Yunnan provincial government, said. "This project will be the model of eco-economy and sustainable development in China."

In the near future, more communities in the region are expected to join the environment and biodiversity protection campaign, Wu said.

Alstom Foundation, a French clean technology company, will give the project €1 million (8.7 million yuan) over five years.

"We care about Northwest Yunnan, in view of the region's rich biodiversity. We expect to further the cooperate with local

communities and people in China through this project," said Claude Burckbuchler, Alstom China president.

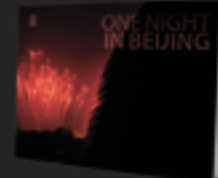
Burckbuchler said the results of this kind of project will not be apparent in just one or two years; goals should be set long-term. He said a similar project in France achieved result after years of biodiversity conservation effort, and has struck a balance between economic development and environmental protection.

"When we look back on the project five years later, we hope to see the same balance," Claude said.



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Charity event to raise funds for Ningxia children

By Annie Wei

A program that will feature jazz, electronic and pop music will be held in Yugong Yishan on Sunday to raise money to send Ningxia children to school. This is the second year Children of Ningxia will sponsor a charity event at Yugong Yishan.

Many people are unfamiliar with Children of Ningxia, but the group was established after a book about an impoverished girl from the northwestern province became a hit in 2002. The story of Ma Yan was about simply wanting to go to school.

In 2002, Pierre Haski, a French correspondent for the *Liberation* daily, was on a reporting trip in Ningxia when a woman hurried out of her house and

thrust some tattered notebooks in his hands. They contained the diary of her daughter, Ma Yan, whom she could no longer afford to send to school.

After Haski published an article on Ma, who dropped out at age 13, readers were moved and proposed to help the girl and her family. Haski ended up getting *Ma Yan's Diary* published and founded the Association Enfants du Ningxia, or Children of Ningxia.

The book has been translated into 19 languages; Ma Yan has finished high school; and the association continues to work and help Ningxia children go to school.

Children of Ningxia works with each child long-term. "It's not one or two years of care or support," Laurent Peyrot, a member of the orga-

nization, said. "There's a 10-year plan for each child."

Peyrot said each child beneficiary will receive support until he or she finishes university, unless the economic situation of the student's family greatly improves. So far, the organization has given 143 individuals a scholarship.

What makes the association proud is that 33 of these students are already attending university. "There are now four of our students at Beijing universities," Peyrot said.

Apart from sponsoring scholarships, the organization also works to help improve school facilities and the quality of teaching.

According to Guangzhou-based *Nanfang Weekend's* series of reports on substitute teachers,

there are about half a million substitute teachers in the country's western rural areas who make 300-400 yuan a month. To make ends meet, these teachers also have to work in farms.

The organization has been subsidizing the salary of three untenured teachers since 2007, bringing their income from €30 euros (260 yuan) to €70 euros per month.

Last year, 250 people attended the concert, which raised 50,000 yuan, Peyrot said.

When: December 7, 6:30 pm

Where: Yugong Yishan, 2-3 Duanqirufu, Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6404 2711

Cost: 50 yuan for adults, 30 yuan for students and children under 12

Event

Conservation Christmas with Dr Jane Goodall

An intimate dinner with Dr. Jane Goodall, who is in town for a month to promote conservation and environmental work. Cocktails begin at 5:30 pm and dinner at 6 pm.

When: December 5, 5:30-8:30 pm

Where: Traders Upper East Side, Xiaoyun Qiao, Dongsihuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 600 yuan for adults, 300 yuan for kids or 800 yuan for one adult and one child.

Contact: ticket@jgchina.org

Web site: jgchina.org

Toning Drum community drumming

Toning Drum offers hand drumming classes from beginner to advanced level. There are classes for children aged 1 to 6 accompanied by their parents, student aged 7 to 19 and adults. Students will learn how to play the Djembe drum and other percussion instruments, and dances and songs to go with African and Latin music. All instruments will be supplied by the school. The main language of instruction is English.

When: Every Saturday

Where: The British School of Beijing, 5 Xiliu Jie, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: Free

Te: 8447 2638

Beijing Improv Two-Year Anniversary Extravaganza

Laugh away the winter blues as Beijing Improv celebrates its second year anniversary. Using headlines from the last two years and suggestions from participants, the group will rewrite history using an innovative format. It features hilarious audience-inspired skits, improvised songs for family members aged 18 and above. The show will be followed by an after-party.

When: December 6, 8-10 pm

Where: Peng Hao Theatre, 35 Dong Mian Hua Hutong, Dongcheng District

Contact:

beijingimprov@gmail.com

(By Wei Ying)

Children cheer on their Music Day



Sarah Peel, a music teacher, leads children to sing.

Photo provided by Kindermusik

By Jackie Zhang

Children from both here and abroad enjoyed a happy time at the Kindermusik Beijing 2nd Annual Children's Music Day last Sunday at the Canadian International School of Beijing.

Children performed on their best instruments and took part in music games. Parents were also involved.

"Music is the common language for people, as well as an important way to develop babies and kids' potential," Li Li, business manager of Kindermusik, a music program brand from US, said. "The music day gives children a chance to perform and show their music potential and develop their social communication ability."

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New drug treatment center opens in Chaoyang

By Venus Lee

A new detoxification center for methadone addicts was opened in Yanjingxili, Chaoyang District on Monday, bringing the city's total number to 10. The police have made it clear that addicts who voluntarily undergo treatment at these stations cannot be arrested.

The person seeking treatment, who needs to be at least 20 years old, first needs to have his or her fingerprints taken before being given medication. All activity inside the centers is monitored by closed circuit cameras to guard against theft of drugs.

Foreigners can apply for treatment by providing their dosage information certified by the last detoxification center visited. The person will also need to show his or her passport and visa. "However, all personal information of the patient will be kept strictly confidential," Liu Yinhua, director of the Yanjingxili station, said.

Local residents and those from other parts of the country who have lived in the city for six or more months can apply for treatment. The person needs to show an ID or his or her household register booklet, including a photocopy of it.

Methadone is a potent synthetic



Local police helps clinics to register but will not arrest anyone takes the treatment. Photo by Dragon Wang

narcotic that is less addictive than morphine or heroin and is used as a substitute for these drugs in addiction treatment programs. The appropriate dose can control addiction for 24 to 36 hours with fewer side-effects, but the patients must take it daily. "The medication costs

patients 10 yuan a day, and the government subsidizes about 300,000 yuan each year," Liu said.

As for worries about arrests being made at the detoxification centers, Chaoyang Police said they have issued a directive against this to encourage addicts

to seek treatment.

The Yanjingxili methadone treatment center can be reached by telephone at 6591 3654. For treatment centers in other districts, contact the Beijing Municipal Center for Disease Control and Prevention at telephone number 12320.

CDMA business suspended this weekend

By Wang Yu

China Telecom has taken over China Unicom's Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) network service after the fixed-line operator abandoned it Monday.

China Unicom said that its CDMA network, which enables 3G mobile phone services, had been transferred to China Telecom.

China Unicom's CDMA online offices have stopped operating. Customers who call its 10010 service hotline will be asked to call 10000. Customers are also asked to do CDMA-related transactions at China Telecom offices.

The CDMA network will be down from midnight December 6 to 8 am December 8. During this period, all CDMA-related businesses will be suspended, whether in local offices or online.

From December 6, all China Unicom prepaid phone cards, such as the "Ruyi Tong" card will be invalidated. Card holders are advised to use the cards before the expiry date and charge all your prepaid cards' money into your mobile phone.

There are only a few CDMA phones available to subscribers. China Telecom also founded the Tian Yi brand, a mobile phone trader. Tian Yi has procured more than 5 million CDMA handsets from manufacturers such as ZTE, Huawei Technologies, Hisense, Coolpad and Samsung. The handsets cover more than 70 mobile phone models, a strategy seen as preparation for the massive promotion of CDMA in the future.

Limited edition Olympic posters on sale

By Jin Zhu

Ten thousand sets of Olympic posters, authorized for publication by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG), went on sale Monday.

The set, which costs 388 yuan, consists of 31 posters: a set of 25 posters for each Olympic Games since 1896 and a set of six posters from the Beijing Games. The Beijing posters contain memorable images from the 2008 Games, such as the opening ceremony, the five mascots, the bird's nest and the emblem. The two suits of posters are bundled and packaged in paper holders with pictures of auspicious cloud torches.

"There is a directive on the quantity of Olympic posters to be

published to maintain its value," Du Mo, manager of the Beijing New Media Research Center, one of the poster publishers, said. "The current Olympic posters have 10,000 sets on sale and negatives for all 31 posters will be destroyed at the end of the month."

Beijing New Media Research Center

Where: 1205, Building 2, Liangmahe Dasha, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6590 0606

Liangmahe Hotel Supermarket

Where: 8 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6590 6688

Beijing Morning Post

Where: 3/F, Building A, Donghuan Plaza, Dongcheng District

Tel: 6418 3456

Hualiu Fengshang Hypermarket

Where: 9 Sifangjingyuan, Nansanhuan Dong Lu, Fengtai District

Tel: 8764 5038

Water Cube (inside the Olympic Stadium)

Where: Beijing Olympic Park, Chaoyang District

Chengchuangzaixian

Where: 801, Building 5, 67 Chaoyang Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 5165 8617

Kerry Centre Hotel

Where: 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6561 8833

Aviation Industry Press

Where: 33 Huixin Xi Jie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6497 8486

Ski season is here again!

By Zhao Hongyi

Ski resorts around Beijing opened their doors to customers this week. Prices are down 10 percent on average, because of the financial crisis and the early Spring Festival this year. Groups will enjoy a considerable discount, said He Ping, chairman of the popular Jundushan Ski Resort. Normally, each resort has its own buses to pick customers. Call for details.

Jundushan Ski Resort

Price: 100 yuan/person
150 yuan/person (weekend)
160 yuan (holidays)

Tel: 6072 5888

Yuyang Ski

Price: 90 yuan/person

130 yuan/person (weekend)

Tel: 5869 3355

Badaling Holiday Snow

Price: 100 yuan/person
130-150 yuan/person (week-end)

Tel: 6501 0331

Shijinglong Ski Resort

Price: 120 yuan/person
120 yuan/person for 4 hours (weekend)

Tel: 6919 1617

Huaibei Ski

Price: 100 yuan/person
140 yuan/person (weekend)
Tel: 8969 6677

Nanshan Ski

Price: 110 yuan/person
200 yuan/person (weekend)
Tel: 8909 1909



Couple skiing at Yunfoshan CFP Photo

Lianhuashan Ski

Price: 100 yuan/person
120 yuan/person (weekend)
Tel: 5128 6080

Yunfoshan Ski Resort

Price: 70 yuan/person
100 yuan/person (weekend)
130 yuan/person (holidays)
Tel: 8903 2601

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

Christmas is coming and I want to get a tree and decorations, but don't know where to go.

For Christmas trees, you can go to the Yuquanying Flower Market.

Yuquanying Flower Market

Where: 71 Nansanhuan Xi Lu, Fengtai District

Tel: 6330 3946

Beijing Green Garden Group (Huaxiang)

Where: North of Caoqiao exit, Nansihuan, Fengtai District

Tel: 8750 3972

You can find affordable Christmas decorations at the **Liangma Flower Market**

Where: 8 Bei Lu, Dongsanhuan, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6504 2446

Laitai Flower

Where: 9 Maizidian Xi Lu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6563 6554

I need to send presents to my company's clients before Christmas. What delivery service should I use - China Post or a private courier?

For local delivery, private couriers charge less than China Post. A box of chocolates for example, will be charged by China Post depending on its weight, and one has to pay extra for a special China Post package. A local courier, however, will just charge 10 yuan per address.

I got an automated telephone message this morning, which seems to be about my phone bill. These calls start coming at the 20th of each month even though I pay my bills on time. How can I stop these annoying phone calls?

These are calls to remind you to pay your phone bill on time. Once you pay the month's bill, these calls should stop. Sometimes these calls are not an automated message, but from an employee at the telephone company.

A friend is coming to Beijing from abroad and is trying to decide whether to do it before or after the Chinese New Year. Since almost everything grinds to a halt for a week or two during the holiday, I'm afraid she will be bored once she gets here.

There is still a lot to see in Beijing during the Spring Festival or Chinese New Year. The locals observe old cultural practices like going to temple fairs. Big stores will be open everyday; only small shops take a long break.

(By Wei Ying)

A nation bursts with music

In Venezuela, there has never been a more impressive, consolidated, overwhelming and futuristic socio-cultural project than the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela. The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela (SBYOV) was founded in 1975 by Jose Antonio Abreu and might be the largest artistic product of the 200-orchestra system.

Venezuela has a population of 290,000 children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 20 involved in orchestra, and 60 percent of them come from the lower social strata.

"This model has raised the bar of musical activity in our country. It has allowed the careers of musicians, composers, music teachers, orchestra directors and soloists to become important and well-paid professionals in Venezuela, and never

again to be socially alienated and underestimated," Rocio Maneiro Gonzalez, the Venezuelan ambassador, said.

The system was founded 33 years ago and has introduced 700,000 children and youngsters to music. It aims "to benefit the greatest amount of children, adolescents and families through education and art, to develop the personality of Venezuelans and to achieve social integration through artistic and professional development of Venezuelans that face neglect, poverty, physical disability and drug addiction," she said.

Abreu is one of the pioneers of the system. In 1979, he created the State's National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela Foundation, a network joining all the states with their youth, children and pre-school symphony orchestras.

"Art has ceased to be the monopoly of elites, and is firmly established as a social right of our people. As a result, the artistic education of children and youth is a signal of an unparalleled social revolution that no seriously committed social project can deny. The more we educators passionately convince ourselves of the huge potential of art, the closer we will be to finding the miracle key to the elimination of poverty," Abreu said.

"Art has ceased to be the monopoly of elites, and is firmly established as a social right of our people."

The 27-year-old conductor Gustavo Dudamel benefited from the music education system. "A project which does not generate a result has no reason to exist. The Orchestras System project has had a result. I am living proof," Dudamel said.

Dudamel studied music from an early age, becoming involved with the music education system, and took up violin at age 10. "I was four years old, and from that moment on I was part of a family that led me to learn values, not only musical ones, but life lessons for situations that I have to face, and that is the success of the system," he said.

He attended the Jacinto Lara Conservatory, where he was taught violin by Jose Luis Jimenez. He began to study conducting in 1995, first with Rodolfo Saglimbeni, then later with Abreu. In 1999, he was appointed music director of the SBYOV and toured several countries.

Dudamel began to win a number of conducting competitions, including the Gustav Mahler Conducting Prize in Germany in 2004. He is currently principal conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and has been appointed music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, effective next October.

He holds his baton extremely high, almost above his head and usually holds the baton with his fingertips. During fast and frenetic music, he tends to lift himself off the podium in a whirling, cyclic movement.

"My father played in a salsa group, so I started to dance when I was really small — a baby. Learning to dance is part of our culture — dancing is in our blood. Latin music is all about dance, about rhythm," he said.

In China's programs, he and the orchestra will perform a Venezuelan musician Evencio Castellanos's Santa Cruz de Pacairigua. The piece combines colorful folk tunes, dazzling rhythms and threads of Gregorian chant in the final section depicting the religious celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi,

"A project which generates a result has no reason to exist. The Orchestras System project has had a result. I am living proof."

which celebrates the mystique of Christ.

"We decided to choose our own composer to show the music. We created a little rumba party, a fiesta," he said.

With the tour's performance, Venezuela's music education system has attracted the attention of many other countries. On November 1995, UNESCO declared the World System of Youth Orchestras according to the Venezuelan model.

At the end of each concert, the orchestra usually wear their traditional Venezuelan dress and sway their bodies.

The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela Concert

Where: Concert Hall, Beijing Performing Arts Center

When: December 11, 7:30 pm for Berlioz's Second Suite and December 12, 7:30 pm for Berlioz's Second Suite and Mahler's Symphony No. 5

Admission: 880 yuan (VIP), 180 yuan (General)

Tel: 6655 0000

Gustavo Dudamel and the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra bring passion to classic music.

Photo provided by National Center for Performing Arts



ing

Gustavo Dudamel and Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra

By He Jianwei

In May, the Prince of Asturias Arts Award 2008 went to the National Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela. The judges agreed that the orchestras have combined "the highest artistic quality and a profound ethical conviction applied for the improvement of our social reality" and the music education system in Venezuela "has worked in collaboration with prominent figures of worldwide acclaim to train conductors and performers of the highest level, in accordance with a strong conviction that music has an essential educational value for the dignity of mankind."

On December 11 and 12, the legendary Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra and its promising conductor Gustavo Dudamel will perform at the National Center for Performing Arts. Dudamel and the orchestra are regarded as the driving force of this century's classical music for both their performances and passion.

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Center stage

Editors: He Jianwei Li Jing Designer: Yang Gen

BEIJING TODAY

Florida killer trilogy claims National Book Award

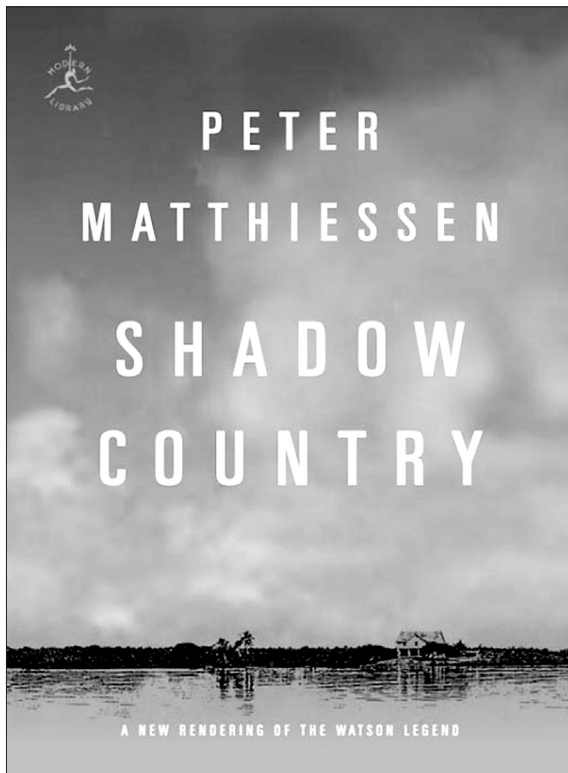
By Charles Zhu

The annual National Book Award was given to Peter Matthiessen for his *Shadow Country* (912pp, Random House, US \$28) trilogy, which is about Edgar J. Watson, sometimes known as Bloody Watson or Emperor Watson, a ruthless entrepreneur and cane farmer who settled in the west coast of Florida.

At the award ceremony, Matthiessen said that he was back again. He was right, as he won the 1979 National Book Award with his nonfiction *The Snow Leopard*, an account of his trek through Nepal with the zoologist George Schaller in 1973.

Matthiessen, 81, lives near the beach in Sagaponack, New York, on a 2.5-hectare island of trees surrounded by former potato fields. There is a Buddhist meditation room in a converted stable where Matthiessen serves as a Zen monk three times a week.

He is better known as a journalist and a travel writer with some 28 books behind him. He began writing in the 1950s after an extensive travel of Europe. He was one of founders of the *Paris Review* and once supported himself as a commercial fisherman. However, he said he fancied himself a novelist,



though with a wife and a family he could hardly make any money.

Matthiessen published his trilogy *Killing Mister Watson*, *Lost Man's River* and *Bone by Bone* by Modern Library from 1990 to 1999. This one-volume compilation is 400 pages shorter. The novel is set in the Florida Everglades and deals with its oppression of blacks and Indians. Edgar Watson was a his-

torical figure born in 1855 and was an extremely successful entrepreneur. His neighbors so hated him as a brute that they shot him 33 times. Watson himself was a serial killer. The first part is retold by a group of Watson's killers; the second is a narrative by his son Lucius, who is bent on finding out the truth about his father's life, and the third is a narrative by Watson himself.

The author tried to make Watson a character in whom everyone would take interest. He was not interested in Watson's criminal mind. He believed that Watson was more than a criminal in the usual sense. Matthiessen thought it a great challenge to portray Watson as a normal man.

Watson was said to have killed 55 people, one for every year of his life. But, the author could only identify seven. He said, "Of course, seven is plenty. One of the things I did was make him funny – by my warped sense of the word."

After the publication of his trilogy, Matthiessen set about restructuring the complete work. He was not happy with the second part, and considered it a mess which hid some of the best parts. He brought in new characters and gave them a voice, like Henry Short, a black man who probably fired the first shot. He dropped some other characters and shortened the time span by 40 years. The effort took seven years in what was otherwise thought to be a year's matter "just for his own satisfaction."

Despite the award, the author has threatened to rewrite it again. He said he is such a perfectionist that he can tolerate no weakness in his writing.

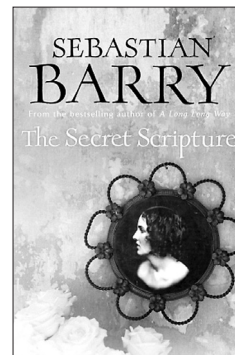
Bookworm booklisting

Jenny Niven from the Bookworm recommends the following new arrivals to *Beijing Today* readers.

The Secret Scripture

By Sebastian Barry, 320pp, Faber and Faber, 210 yuan

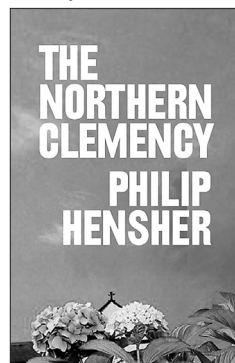
Nearing her one hundredth birthday, Roseanne McNulty faces an uncertain future as closure looms before the Roscommon Regional Mental hospital, where she spent the best part of her adult life. Over the weeks leading up to this upheaval, she talks often with psychiatrist Dr. Grene. This relationship, guarded but trusting after so many years, intensifies and complicates as Dr. Grene mourns the death of his wife. Told through their respective journals, the story that emerges—of Roseanne's family in 1930s Sligo—is at once shocking and deeply beautiful.



The Northern Clemency

By Philip Hensher, 736pp, Fourth Estate Ltd, 290 yuan

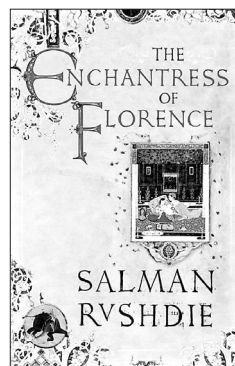
Set in Sheffield, it charts the relationship between two families: Malcolm and Katherine Glover and their three children; and their neighbors the Sellers, newly arrived from London so that Bernie Sellers can pursue a job with the Electricity Board. The Sellers move in the day of a crisis across the road: Malcolm Glover left home, convinced his wife is having an affair. The effects of this rupture will ripple across the lives of both couples and their children, in particular 10-year-old Tim Glover, who never quite recovers from a moment of his mother's public cruelty and the amused taunting of 15-year-old Sandra Sellers – childhood crises that will come to a head 20 years later.



The Enchantress of Florence

By Salman Rushdie, 368pp, Jonathan Cape Ltd, 285 yuan

The Enchantress is the story of a woman attempting to command her own destiny in a man's world. It brings together two cities that barely know each other – the hedonistic Mughal capital, in which the brilliant emperor wrestles daily with questions of belief, desire and the treachery of sons, and the equally sensual Florentine world of powerful courtesans, humanist philosophy and inhuman torture, where Argalia's boyhood friend 'il Machia' – Niccolo Machiavelli – is learning, the hard way, about the true brutality of power.



(By He Jianwei)

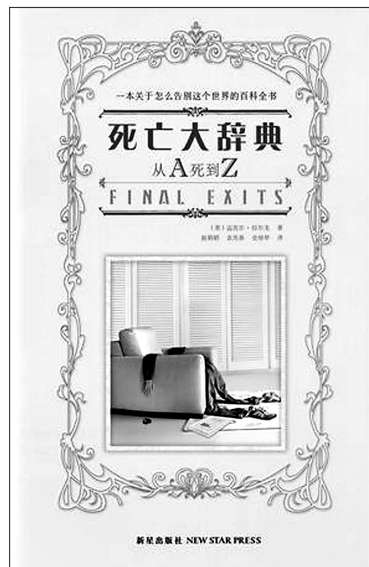
Guide to great human exits

By He Jianwei

Monday is the best day to undergo surgery, because it has the lowest death rate statistically. A husband killed his wife because she threatened to say "New Jersey." A 21-year-old woman died of hunger – despite eating three meals a day – because she ate her own hair.

According to death certificates, there were fewer than 100 causes of death in 1700. Today, there are 3,000. Michael Largo, who has collected statistics and information on the American way of death for more than a decade, compiled his findings in the 2006 book *Final Exits: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of How We Die* (496pp, Harper Paperbacks, US \$15.95). Now the Chinese version, *Death Encyclopedia: From A to Z* (translated by Zhao Juanjuan, Yi Guangchun and Shi Peihua, 430pp, New Star Press, 38 yuan), is available.

On douban.com, a Web site with discussion forums for books, music and movie, most readers highly recommended the book. "Death is unpredictable and painful, but before it comes a precious life full of possibilities," Fan Dong, a freelance book critic, said.



"In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote, 'In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.' Death remains a certainty. But how do we die? It's the enormous variety of how that enlivens final exits," Largo wrote in the preface.

In his childhood, Largo's father was a policeman in the New York

Police Department."He knew every corner where the murders or deaths happened. No one knew what happened in those places, even the owners of the buildings, so I thought we could leave a mark to prevent misfortune," he said.

With each advance in technology, people find new ways to die, often causing trends that peak in the first year. People are killed by everything, from cell phones, washing machines, lawn mowers and toothpicks, to the boundless catalog of man-made medicines.

In *Final Exits*, the causes of death – bizarre or common – are alphabetically arranged and include accounts of people, both famous and ordinary, who checked out under that letter. Ants, bad words, Bingo, bean bag chairs, flying cows, frozen toilets, hiccups, lipstick, moray eels, roadkill, starfish, and toupees are only some of the more unusual causes.

"If we ignore the death, we will not have a better quality of life. The meditation on death is meant to give us a better future ... It's not good to think about death every day, but this book can give us some ideas on how to avoid it," Fan said.

When online games go physical

By Zhang Dongya

The next time you board the subway or enter a store, you might find a big group of people frozen in mid-action. Don't panic! The aliens aren't here, these are just participants in a new online game.

Since May, "No Game, No Life," the name and motto of the new group, has drawn people who are keen on "organized fun" to the city for its games in public places. The group has successfully executed two missions, and its third round of game starts Saturday.

Playing and living

Luo Hua, 25, founded "No Game, No Life" on Douban.com this May under the handle "Khaki."

She now works as a designer and planner in a local company. Her colleagues have no idea about her involvement, and to them she is "gentle and quiet," and "not the playful type."

"Actually, I am crazy about playing, and once I start I take it very seriously," Khaki said.

"Life was so tedious and dull, that's when I stumbled on videos of Improv Everywhere, a New York-based organization for entertainment in public places," she said. She was immediately taken by the style of activities she organized.

Khaki's idea was quick to gain support from Douban.com members. "I think no one will refuse something that's fun. Playing is an attitude, and we want to live a playful life," the group said on its Web site.

Khaki chose "Frozen" as the organization's first mission. The game is already popular throughout the country's big cities, and each event draws hundred of participants.

After several small-scale rehearsals, on a cloudy Saturday in June, 115 participants froze in place for five minutes on Wangfujing Street. Life slowed down when pedestrians and tourists stopped to notice what was happening around them.

In July, the group held its second event, "Cross-country Orienteering" in order to learn more about Beijing. A native Beijinger

named "Black and White" made 10 puzzles related to the city's characteristic landmarks in the four districts Xicheng, Dongcheng,

Chongwen and Xuanwu.

"Five of the 11 groups solved the puzzles and reached the destination," Khaki said.



Fun and interaction

Most people think of "performance art" when they hear about games in public places, but Khaki dislikes the grand title.

"It can be called a 'show' or 'performance,' since everyone shows himself before the public. But 'art' should be something serious. What our organization tries to do is to make life interesting, funny and relaxed. Sure, we can find more than fun in the games," she said. "I think it gives people a chance to let out their other self, and it encourages funny interaction between bystanders and participants."

The theme of Frozen was "we are not wood-made," and every participant wore a sticker with their logo. "When the whistle blew, we froze in place in all kinds of postures. I acted as though my handbag was robbed by another participant. It was very funny to watch the videos that followed," Khaki said.

Reactions varied. Elderly people did not know what was happening, and some foreigners joined in, posing on their own or taunting those who had frozen. However, none missed what was the day's best photographic opportunity.

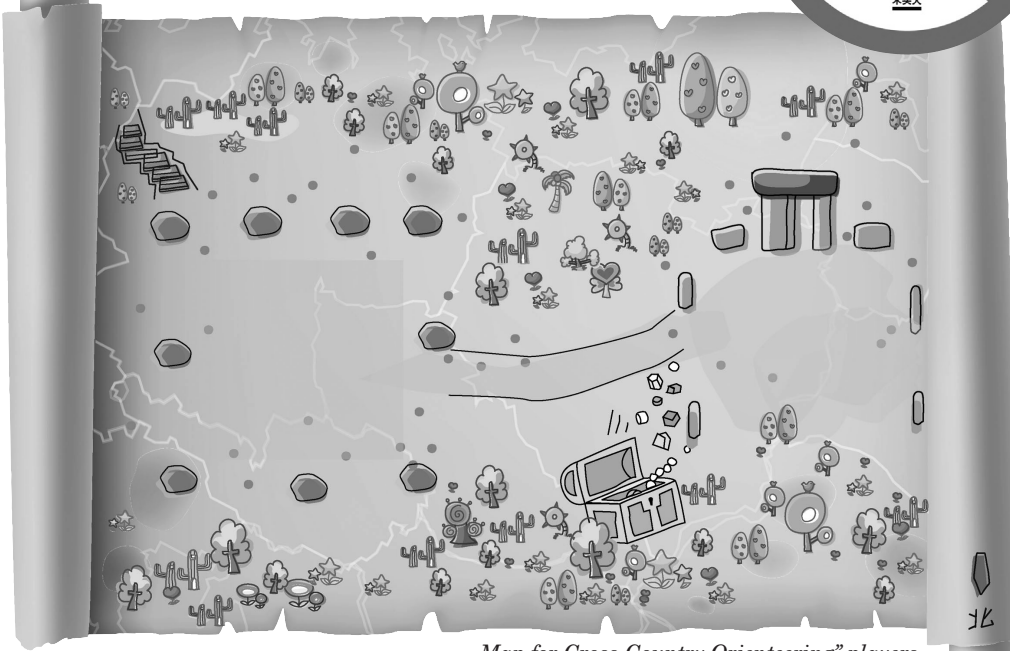
Everyone paid attention to the five minutes, she said, counting the seconds as they tried to hold their pose, even without blinking.

"I saw one participant's tears in a photo. His eyes were hurting too



The route signs for participants in Cross-Country Orienteering.

"We're not wooden men." was the slogan of the group driving "Frozen."



Map for Cross-Country Orienteering" players.

much to remain open any longer. There were also some who couldn't help laughing. But, everyone tried to challenge themselves during the given time," she said.

Rules, considerations

Improv Everywhere has completed 80 missions since 2001.

The third round begins this weekend. It is a "Speaking-out" game, which requires participants to wear the clothes they rarely dare to go out in while carrying a sign board with words they don't dare to say.

They will be expected to appear at Xidan Culture Square Saturday afternoon. The organizer planned to have 50 participants, and so far 100 people have signed up.

"For each mission, we will take the number of participants, place and final effects into consideration," Khaki said. "The successful missions in foreign countries can give us some ideas, but we have special strategies in domestic environment."

One of the most famous missions of Improv Everywhere is the Frozen at the world's largest train station Grand Central Station in New York. But the "No Game, No Life" chose to freeze in Wangfujing Street instead of Beijing Railway Station or Beijing West Railway Station.

"The railway stations are too crowded already, so we will only make trouble if we chose those places. We have principles and rules to follow to avoid making trouble or bothering others," Khaki said.



Even if you fall, you have to hold the gesture



Khaki leads all the group's games.



Frozen on Wangfujing. Photos provided by Khaki

Fashionable, luxurious Christmas

By Gan Tian

With the Christmas season underway, party animals are rummaging for what to wear to big nights out or how to decorate their homes to impress guests. *Beijing Today* visits two newly-opened flagship stores of two big international brands. So if you want an unforgettably fashionable Christmas and are prepared to spend for it, read on.

Telling a Chinese story the French way

The Middle Kingdom ... the Forbidden City ... the Silk Road ...

Ancient China is gifted with a soul that has always enchanted our readings and daydreams. Even French jewelry and crystal company Rene Lalique drew inspiration from these and produced its "China Mood" series.

The collection tells stories from ancient times through creations of timeless modernity. Inspired by colorful lanterns, elegant fans and bamboo groves, "China Mood" takes customers to a romantic world filled with dragons and towards Lijiang, an old city of Yunnan Province, whose name means "Beauty of the Lake."

Each Lalique creation reinterprets the codes, ancestral symbols and thousands-year-old heritage of China. The Lijiang vase, for instance, combines impeccable design with crystals to marry the old and the new. The geometrical lines of its body, inspired by pagoda roofs, contrast with spirals on both its sides. Inspired by the waves, clouds and haze on the lake, the artist has fashioned the crystal in a twist that encourages the imagination to roam free.

A majestic, powerful creature, the dragon has long inspired artists. Tianlong, the celestial dragon, is the most powerful of them all. Lalique celebrates this legendary animal, a symbol of strength, wealth and life, through the Tianlong amber vase, which is issued in a limited edition of 88 pieces as homage to the figure eight, which is auspicious.

Entirely fashioned by hand, the Tianlong vase is adorned with the amber dragon, created by artisans using a process called double-injection. The creature's undulating body is covered with scintillating scales that highlight the purity of the crystal.

Lalique

Where: F1, South Tower, Parkson Shopping Mall, 101 Fuxingmen Nei Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm
Tel: 6607 2178



Serpent SPS necklace
- Red Crystal Aventurine Garnet

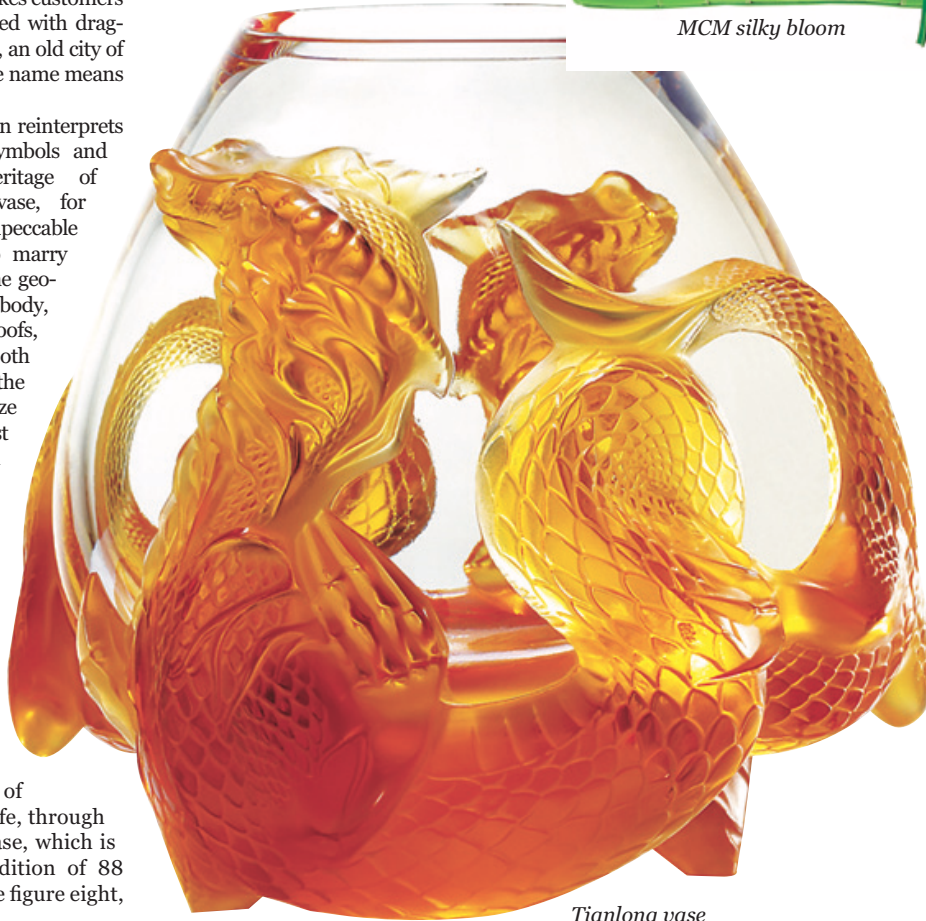


MCM silky bloom

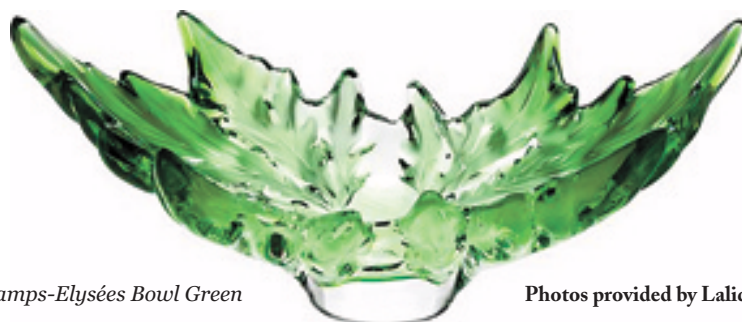


MCM black jacquard

Photos provided by MCM



Tianlong vase



Champs-Élysées Bowl Green

Photos provided by Lalique

Out to reclaim its cool

Mode Creation Munich, or MCM, has had a tough time in Europe. It wants to strike back by making it big in Asia. Founded in 1976, the brand became so popular in Europe in the 80s that people could not walk a city block without bumping into someone with an MCM bag, sneakers, hat or jacket. But fashion lovers soon tired of the brand; like many 80s-era labels, the hype and over-saturation landed the label under the category "uncool," as Hollywood actress Jennifer Aniston would say.

With Sung-Joo Kim becoming the company's CEO this year, MCM is poised to reclaim its cool. Kim, who has already introduced MCM to Germany, Greece and New York, has a track record of launching in the Asian market luxury brands like Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and Sonia Rykiel.

Kim's corporate savvy is matched by the designs of Michael Michalsky, former creative director of Adidas, who has been tapped for the same role at MCM. This season, he debuted a collection full of the classic, iconic MCM leather logo, but he has also presented shoppers with fresh options like sorbet-colored totes and decadent croc-skin clutches. The collection has been a hit with New York City's fashion glitterati, who showed up in droves last month for the launch of MCM's US flagship store in The Big Apple.

MCM is now getting acquainted with Beijing's fashionistas. The brand opened its first shop in town at the Peninsula Beijing Hotel in Wangfujing in May. At the end of last month, it opened its second branch at the Park Hyatt Beijing, bringing luxurious European taste to this dynamic, colorful city.

MCM The Peninsula Beijing Hotel

Where: The Peninsula Beijing Hotel, 8 Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8516 2888 ext 3529 or 3530

Open: 11 am – 9 pm

MCM Park Hyatt Beijing

Where: Park Hyatt Beijing, 2 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 8517 1280

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Cheap, sumptuous meals at Dongsi Sitiao

By Wang Yu

The soul of good cooking seems to reside in small restaurants that offer cheap yet sumptuous food. This week, *Beijing Today* visits a cluster of restaurants that named themselves "The Impression of Dongsi Sitiao." We advise you not to look down on these "working class" establishments as you will likely become a return customer after just one meal.



Hao Ku's roasted scallop

Photos by Wang Yu



Bajiu Daocai's Jintang Huiyu

Bajiu Daocai

Bajiu Daocai offers Sichuan cuisine and is considered an expert in fish dishes. Restaurant owner Ye Ge, who used to be a police officer, is credited for naming the food area "The Impression of Dongsi Sitiao."

Loyal customers keep coming back for the restaurant's Suantang Huiyu (48 yuan) and Jintang Huiyu (48 yuan), which features huiyu, a fish that can be found in Wujiang, a tributary of the Yangtze River. Both dishes have a spicy-sour taste with the undeniable strong flavors characteristic of Sichuan cooking.

Jianghu Yidao (56 yuan) is another popular choice on the restaurant's menu. It is a mix of several kinds of seafood and vegetables covered in Bajiu Daocai's special sauce.

Where: 83 Dongsi Sitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm for lunch; 5-10 pm for dinner

Tel: 6406 5882

Average cost: 50 yuan per person

Hao Ku

Oysters and roasted scallops are this year's most popular dishes. Though more and more restaurants offering these specialties have emerged, Hao Ku still ranks number one among diners for its food's freshness and taste of local cooking.

The restaurant is situated in a traditional Chinese courtyard and is decorated in Old Beijing style. "To make sure the seafood is fresh, our offerings are limited everyday. The oysters and the scallops are delivered to the restaurant at noon based on the orders we get," said Sun Miao, 23, who runs the restaurant.

Diners usually need to order a day in advance, especially for dinner. "The seats inside the restaurant are limited, so sometimes customers have to wait despite having placed an advance order," he said. "Of course we will keep your share until you get to your table."

All of the seafood in Hao Ku comes from Zhanjiang, a portside town in southern Guangdong Province. "It is one of the top oyster and scallop producing areas in the country. From now until spring, it is

the best season for eating them because the colder the sea water becomes, the fatter they will be," Sun said.

Sun, who used to work for an advertising company, got the idea for Hao Ku's specialty dishes on a visit to Guangdong. "People in the northern coastal areas enjoy these kinds of seafood but they prefer to eat oysters without much cooking to reserve its freshness," he said. "I worked with professional cooks who used garlic and other spices to counteract the fishy smell and make it acceptable to local customers." Oysters (42 yuan) and Roasted Scallops with Black Pepper and Garlic (48 yuan) is the most popular on Hao Ku's menu.

Guihua Shanyao (12 yuan), or Yam with Osmanthus Flower, is also a Hao Ku dish not to be missed.

Where: 82 Dongsi Sitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm for lunch; 5 – 10 pm for dinner

Tel: 8404 2104

Average cost: 60 yuan per person



Hao Ku's oysters



Bian Lian's roasted chicken wings

Bian Lian

Bian Lian is also the name of a technique used in traditional Sichuan opera, and the design of this restaurant might cause some people to mistake it for a small theater.

Roasted chicken wings (3.5 yuan for two) is Bian Lian's most popular dish, which is classified into degrees of spiciness. Diners who want a chili challenge should try out the Bian Tai La extremely spicy!

Good thing they also serve Qingren Guo (12 yuan), made from cucumber, to help cool down the tongue after a spicy feast.

Where: 78 Dongsi Sitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm for lunch; 5-10 pm for dinner

Tel: 8403 7056

Average cost: 30 yuan per person



Huiji's roasted vegetables

Hui Ji

The restaurant, which got its name from the owner's nickname Huixiang, meaning fennel in English, specializes in southern roasts with the flavors of Hubei cuisine. Aside from roasted seafood, the restaurant focuses on roasted vegetables which bring in female customers and vegetarians.

Though it only has a floor area of about 10 square meters, the restaurant is nicely decorated and well-equipped with a coffee machine, wine bottles and a guitar in one corner.

Where: 78 Dongsi Sitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm for lunch; 5-10 pm for dinner

Average cost: 30 yuan per person



Xiaoxiang Weidao's Biyue Xiuhua

Xiaoxiang Weidao (Ku Xia)

"We do shrimp right," is Xiaoxiang Weidao's slogan – not surprising since this Hunan restaurant prides itself on its shrimp dishes. Its signature dish is Biyue Xiuhua (55 yuan), a phrase used to describe a woman's beauty, but on a platter, features artfully arranged juicy shrimps coated in their special Hunan spicy sauce.

The restaurant, which is owned by a cook himself, has added new dishes to its menu in November.

Where: 83 Dongsi Sitiao, Dongcheng District

Open: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm for lunch; 5-10 pm for dinner

Tel: 6405 4904

Average cost: 50 yuan per person

Redefining space

By He Jianwei

Dutch artist Peter Vink's works mainly revolves around the concept of space. The place where a work is exhibited almost always becomes an important part of the work itself. For almost 10 years, Vink has devoted himself to analyzing the notion of space and to freeing himself from any pre-conceptions when faced with a new environment.

"Qing Jin," Vink's new and specially-conceived exhibition for Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, is an instal-

lation that takes visitors from the entrance of the gallery's Space A hall to its staircase. The function of the space does not change much: it is still a reception area, a room to welcome people. The artist's aim is to show viewers the symmetry of this space and the specific qualities of the room.

"I make works of art whose creation is entirely determined by the conditions of the environment in which they are situated," Vink said.

When Vink approaches a certain space, for him there are no ready-made solutions. Perhaps it is



this openness that allows him to operate in spaces other artists would give up on. The artist himself turns into a blank sheet of paper: by mastering technical and morphological issues, he adapts to any spatial condition, codifies the environment and releases its potential.

Vink has created installations for many galleries in

Beijing, including ROOK and F6 whose designs were inspired by the Beijing Liquor Factory. "These installations are mostly architectural in character and make use of the entire room in which they are constructed, which is why they are large," he said. "The process of creating these installations has come to be an important component of the work itself."

Where: Platform China, 319-1, Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: December 6-20, daily except Monday 11 am - 6 pm

Tel: 6432 0091

Upcoming

Concert

Choral Works by Qu Xixian
Who: Baroque Chamber Chorus of Beijing
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: December 5, 7:30 pm
Admission: 20-150 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

5

Friday, December 5

Exhibition

Transparency Happiness - Natee Utarit Solo Exhibition

This is the Bangkok-based painter's first solo exhibition in China, which features 10 oils, fresh off the easel. It is the extension of his 2007 Bangkok exhibition "The Amusement of Dreams, Hope and Perfection."

Where: Soka Art Center, B103 Sky & Sea Business Plaza, 107 Dongsi Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: Until September 21, daily 10 am - 9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8401 2377

Niu Zhiye Oil Painting Exhibition

Where: New Art Center, 63 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: Until December 25, 9:30 am - 5 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6528 9103

Feeling the Moment - Zeng Yi Solo Exhibition

Where: Tang Sheng Art

Salon, 3818 Warehouse, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 3, daily except Monday 10 am - 6:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8459 9498

Movie Shivachki

One of the films featured in this month's European Film Festival in China, it tells a story about love, friendship and courage.

Where: Instituto Cervantes in Beijing, A1 Gongti Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5879 9666

Nightlife

Three Britpop bands

Where: New Get Lucky Bar (Haoyun), A1 Xingba Lu, Nuren Jie, Chaoyang District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 40 yuan
Tel: 8448 3335

Tun Ladies Night

Ladies drink free from 9 am to midnight.

Where: Tun Bar, 4 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 9 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6585 5866

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Saturday, December 6

Exhibition

Ghosting - Li Qing

Solo Exhibition

The exhibition will present the painting series "Spot the Difference" and "Images of Mutual

Undoing and Unity," as well as 30 films, installations and photographs that will give viewers a deeper understanding of a new generation of Chinese artists who have tried to weave together concept and language.

Where: Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 18, daily except Monday 10 am - 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6543 2086

A Little Tenderness - Li Bo Solo Exhibition

Where: Beijing Art Now Gallery, 12 Gongren Tiyeuan (east gate of Beijing Workers' Stadium), Chaoyang District



Niu Zhiye Oil Painting Exhibition

ang District

When: Until January 31, daily noon - 7 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6551 1632

Flower Fire - Ou Yang Solo Exhibition

Where: New Millennium Gallery, 3818 Warehouse, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 26, daily 10:30 am - 6:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 4122

Nightlife

Iron Mic VII with Royce 5'9"

The most anticipated MC battle of the year showcasing China's finest freestyle MCs and special guest from the US, Royce 5'9".

Where: Vics (inside the north gate of Workers' Stadium), Chaoyang District

When: 9:30 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 5293 0333

Sunday, December 7

7

Exhibition

Enjoy It? - Zhou Yinlun Solo Exhibition

Where: Platform China, 319-1 East End Art Zone A, Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 18, daily



except Monday 11 am - 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 0091

Emotional Situation - Zeng Qingguo's Solo Exhibition

In the world of moods Zeng

created, man flies, meditates and lives like dancing elves.

Where: New Age Gallery, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 31, daily except Monday 11:30 am - 6:30 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 8459 9282

Movie

The Beast Stalker

Directed by Dante Lam, the film features a strong cast led by Nicholas Tse, Nick Cheung

and Zhang Jingchu.

Where: Movie theaters around town

Nightlife

Buyi

This Inner Mongolian band is famous for its folk music renditions.

Where: D22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Wudaokou, Haidian District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 6265 3177

Stage in January

Concert

Radetsky March

Who: China Film Symphony Orchestra
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Butterfly Lovers and the Yellow River

Who: Chai Liang, Tan Xiaotang and the China Film Symphony Orchestra
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 2, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Spirited Away

Who: Hayao Miyazaki and Joe Hisaishi

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Lang Lang New Year Piano Recital

Who: Lang Lang
Where: National Indoor Stadium (inside the Olympic Park), Beichen Dong Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 190-2,009 yuan
Tel: 6417 0058

New Year Orchestral Concert

Who: Conducted by Earnest Martinez-Izquierdo
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6501 1854

Concert of Traditional Chinese Music Classics

Who: Orchestral Music Group of the China Opera and Dance-Drama Theater
Where: Beijing Concert Hall, 1 Bei Xinhua Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-880 yuan
Tel: 6605 7006

Dance

Swan Lake

Who: Hong Kong Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 1, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Beauty and the Beast

Who: Birmingham Royal Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 13-15, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Romeo and Juliet

Who: Birmingham Royal Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 17-18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-1,080 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Cinderella

Who: Israel Ballet
Where: National Grand Theater Opera Hall (west side of the Great Hall of the People), Xicheng District
When: January 28-29, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-880 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

Journey to the West

Who: Guangzhou Acrobatic Troupe, China Oriental Song and Dance Troupe, Songshan Shaolin Martial Arts Troupe and Guangdong Dance School
Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District
When: January 14-31, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6835 4455

(By Li Jing)

Warm up when your body won't do the job

LOW



By Zhang Dongya
Many people

worry when they run a high temperature, as it can be a sign of fever, a symptom of the common cold or flu. However, they seldom pay attention to low body temperature, which can be an even greater danger.

"Any kind of disease can be cured when you warm yourself," said Ishihara Yuumi, a Japanese medical scientist who researched the relationship between body temperature and health. Research shows that low body temperature can lead to many ailments, from headache to hemorrhoids.

Danger of hypothermia

Hypothermia, or low body temperature, is common among people. The normal body temperature is considered to be 36.7°C, but few people have it. Most people are hypothermic due to exposure to cold, shock, alcohol or drug use.

An abnormally low body temperature can be serious, even life-threatening. It decreases immunity, which can induce various illnesses such as cancer, collagen disease, allergy and obesity. Immunity increases 30 percent when the temperature is raised 1°C, and cancer cells multiply fastest at 35°C.

Most people might not have an abnormally low body temperature, but they do have a low temperature state. The following 10 symptoms can serve as a selfcheck.

If you have five or more symptoms,

you could

be hypothermic.

- Cold hands, feet and buttocks
- Easily get colds or the flu
- Always feel tired or weary
- Suffer from menstrual problems?
- Constant constipation
- Gaining weight despite eating less
- Easily grumpy or depressed?
- Frequent headaches
- Feet swell after a day's work
- Rough skin and matte hair

Measure your temperature more

In a routine physical, doctors will check your pulse, breathing rate (respiration) and blood pressure. These basic measurements are called vital signs. Many people measure their weight regularly, but most only check their temperature if they suspect a fever.

But Ishihara said it is more important to monitor temperature than weight. The body temperature is the most vital way to monitor one's health, she said.

Ishihara said humans originated in the tropics, as evidenced by a lack of body hair, therefore the body is better equipped to survive heat than cold. Immunity functions best when the body temperature is 36.5°C.

Since a change in body temperature, especially in the fall, is related to various illnesses, recognizing and preventing temperature changes can be a way to prevent illness.

Generally, a rectal or ear temperature reading is 0.3-0.6°C higher than an oral temperature reading, and a temperature taken in the armpit is 0.3-0.6°C lower than an oral reading.

Some digital ear or forehead thermometers are more convenient and precise. One efficient way is to measure the forehead temperature before and after the meal. The temperature will rise 1-1.5°C after eating. If the temperature change is less than expected, you should consider eating something warmer.

Getting rid of low temperature

Since eating three meals a day is a part of life, the recipes to cure a low body temperature also lies in food.

According to traditional medicine, food can be divided into two

categories: positive and negative.

The former have more warm nutrition and are better for health, and the latter cool the body. Many people eat too much cooling food, and this is considered a major cause of hypothermia.

Things like vinegar, tea, coffee, soda, juice, milk and beer are "negative." Ishihara said too much water is harmful to the body and will lower the temperature. Some succulent fruits, like pineapple, lemon and watermelon, are also "cold."

Traditional Chinese medicine says you are what you eat: literally. Do not bother with the calories or nutrition index^a focus on the shape and color. Foods with dark colors will probably warm up a body, and vice versa.

Salted vegetable are considered warm, since salt removes the "cold" from leaf vegetables, and vegetables such like leeks, garlic, onions stimulate blood circulation.

Avoiding air conditioning can help people's bodies learn to cope with changes in their surroundings. People who spend all their time in air-conditioned rooms shut down their body's ability to sense and adapt to changes. Their hands and feet will turn cold as the air-conditioner works harder.

Exercise can also stimulate blood flow and help to warm up the body.

CFP Photo

Hong Kong on a budget

By Li Jing

Because of the financial crisis, people are adjusting their travel plans to coincide with

shrinking budgets. Beijing Today shares how travelers can stretch their yuan on a visit to this southern China's port.



An old superior court building is now open to visitors.



CFP Photos



① Inside the Central-Mid-Levels escalator
② A view of the Symphony of Light from the Avenue of Stars

③ Hollywood Road's Central District Police Station

④ The landmark, Bank of China Tower

Photos by Li Jing

Sights for free

Hong Kong, although known as a highly consumeristic society, still provides many free tourist spots.

Observation deck at the Bank of China Tower

The Bank of China Tower is located in Central, a flourishing center of activity in the city's business and financial district. Designed by world-renowned Chinese-American architect Ieoh Ming Pei, the tower, clad in a curtain wall of glass and aluminum, is remarkable for its four prism-shaped shafts reflecting the sun's rays like a glittering crystal.

The tower has a free observation deck on the 43rd floor overlooking Victoria Harbor. From there, visitors can enjoy a spectacular panoramic view of Central Hong Kong and the harbor. Visitors can take a free brochure and look over the building models on display at the deck.

• Where: 1 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong

• When: Monday-Friday 8 am - 6 pm, Saturday 8 am - 2 pm, closed on Sundays

Museums

Hong Kong has numerous museums that showcase ancient artifacts and art curios. On Wednesdays, visitors enjoy free admission to museums such as the Hong Kong Museum of History and the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence.

The Hong Kong Museum of History provides information on the city's history, culture and development through exhibits, graphic panels and multimedia programs. The Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence, which is housed in what used to be the Lei Yun Mun Fort, presents the city's 600-year-old history of coastal defence.

• Hong Kong Museum of History

• Where: 100 Chatham Nan Lu, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong

• When: Daily except Monday and Sunday 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday 1 pm - 6 pm

• Admission: HK \$5-10 (4.50-9 yuan); free on Wednesdays

• Tel: (852) 2367 6373

• Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence

• Where: 175 Tung Hei Lu, Shau Kei

Wan, Hong Kong

• When: Daily except Thursday 10 am - 5 pm

• Admission: HK \$5-10 (4.5-9 yuan); free on Wednesdays

• Tel: (852) 2569 1500

A symphony of light

The evening multimedia display, named the World's Largest Permanent Light and Sound Show by the Guinness Book of World Records, turns Victoria Harbor into a fantasy land. It features colored lights, laser beams and searchlights moving in synch with symphony music on 44 buildings on both sides of the harbor.

One of the best views is on the Avenue of the Stars on Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront. From here, visitors can clearly hear the music and narration that goes with the light show.

For the Christmas season, a special fireworks show will be added on the rooftop of participating buildings on both sides of the harbor or stages off Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront.

• Hours: Daily at 8 pm, good weather permitting.

• Notes: On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the narration is in English; on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, it is in Mandarin; and on Sundays in Cantonese.

Central-Mid-Levels escalator

This escalator system, measuring 800 meters in length, is the world's longest outdoor covered escalator. There are several junctions along the route in which visitors can stop to snap shots of the sights below. Along the way are shops selling antiques.

At the bottom of the escalator is Hollywood Road's Central District Police station, which gives visitors a taste of Kong Kong's colonial history.

The escalator also cuts through the booming Soho district, packed with restaurants and bars. In the evening, this place buzzes with groups and couples wining and dining.

• Hours: The escalator moves downhill from 6-10 am and uphill from 10:15 am - midnight. It takes around 25 minutes each way.

• Admission: Free

Continued on page 21...



Central-Mid-Levels escalator

... continued from page 20



Beancurd pudding

Dining in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is regarded by tourists as a food paradise. A tight budget cannot get visitors a banquet meal, but they will definitely not miss dessert.

The best "double skim milk" in Hong Kong is offered by the Yee Shun Milk Company, which has branches all over the city. The snack is similar to pudding but with a delicate texture and creamy flavor. This should not be missed. Sticky Dumplings with Mango Filling and Bean Curd Pudding are also recommended.

Cheap traditional transportation

The city is known for its efficient subway system. Though low-priced, electric trams and the Star Ferry also play an important role in local transportation.

Electric tram

The electric tram is one of the oldest means of transportation in Hong Kong, having served the former British colony since 1904. A hundred years later, there are a fleet of 163 tramcars which includes two open-balcony trams for tourists.

Taking a tram is a good way to experience Hong Kong Island as there are many sightseeing locations along the six main tracks between Kennedy Town and Shau Kei Wan. These sights include Times Square, the Old Supreme Court and the Chinese Methodist Church.

Staff from the tram company can be found at every stop, so it is convenient to ask for help.

- When: Everyday from 6 am – midnight
- Routes: The six routes are from Shau

Kei Wan to Western Market; Shau Kei Wan to Happy Valley; North Point to Whitty Street; Happy Valley to Kennedy Town; and Causeway Bay to Kennedy Town.

- Cost: HK \$2 (1.80 yuan)

Star Ferry

As old as the electric tram, the Star Ferry has been plying the short route between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon on the mainland since colonial times. It is the cheapest way to make the journey.

The sea breeze blows through the historic open plan boats. Views of the Hong Kong skyline are excellent in the afternoon, with the sun illuminating it. It is also a vantage place to view the lights at night.

- When: Trips between Central and Tsim Sha Tsui operate every day from 6:30 am – 11:30 pm, with frequency depending on passenger demand.
- Cost: Upper deck HK \$2.20 (1.95 yuan); lower deck HK \$1.30 (1.15 yuan)



Electric trams provide cheap public transport.



Hostels are reasonably priced and ideal for budget travelers.

Photos by Li Jing

Stay in a hostel

Compared to hotels, Hong Kong's hostels are competitively priced. There are a few hostels in Hong Kong that accept online booking. One is The Yesinn Hostel, whose clients are mostly English speakers and seasoned travelers.

To check out more hostels, visit hostelworld.com or hostelbookers.com.

Get to Hong Kong by train

When talking about taking a train to Hong Kong, many people are overwhelmed by the thought of needing to change trains in Shenzhen. But travelers can take the T97, a direct express train from Beijing to Hong Kong.

On the train timetable, Hong Kong is known as Hung Hom and Beijing as Beijing West. The T97 leaves Beijing every two days, running on even number dates in December 2008 and odd number dates in January 2009. It takes about 24 hours to get to Hong Kong, with only hard and soft sleeper carriages available. The train travels non-stop, so it is recommended that travelers bring reading materials to while away their time.

- Cost: There is a 10 percent discount for one-way trips from May 1 to July 14 and September 1 to December 31. There is a 20 percent discount for round-trips during the same periods. There are discounts for groups of at least four persons.



CFP Photo

The First Rule of Powerful Presentations

By Andy Clark

You've been there. You've sat watching a dull presentation, thinking through some of the ways you could better spend your time. You glance at your watch and exhale deeply as you realize there is another thirty minutes to go. The presenter drones on relentlessly in the same dreary voice, barely moving except to click forward to the next frame of a hopelessly overcrowded PowerPoint presentation. His voice is so monotonous that its effects go from soporific to almost hypnotic and transport you to a distant place, perhaps to childhood memories or to classmates you have missed. You awake with a start, realize the presentation is over. You have retained less than 20 percent of the information and have just wasted an hour of your life. An hour you will never ever get back.

Most people resent this kind of intrusion into their precious time, yet few pause to imagine the effect their own presentations have on others. So how do people respond when you speak? Do you keep them entertained, giving them the information in an entertaining and stimulating way? Do people leave your presentations thoughtful, inspired and with more knowledge than when they entered?

Over the past seven years, I've given over 2,000 presentations to all kinds of people including secretaries at a multinational consultancy, Swiss CFOs, a variety of chambers of commerce, 250 Cantonese



Andy Clark is Business Development Director of ClarkMorgan Corporate Training

"Do you keep them entertained, giving them the information in an entertaining and stimulating way? Do people leave your presentations thoughtful, inspired and with more knowledge than when they entered?"

furniture distributors, my colleagues from eight different countries and to probably the toughest crowd — a large group of school children. It is from the variety

of presentations that I have given that I learned the first rule of presenting: know your audience.

This is probably the most well known piece of advice on presentations ever, and the least well implemented. From the field of NLP (Neuro Linguistics Programming) I learned an incredibly powerful technique called "Perceptual Positions."

Quite simply, it involves seeing, hearing and feeling the world through someone else's perceptions. In this case it refers to the perception of the people you are presenting to. So when your presentation is arranged, take a few minutes just to sit back and relax. Imagine that you are one of the people you are going to present to. For example, if you are presenting to a team of engineers, imagine that is who you are. Not so much "know your audience" as "be your audience!"

Sit like an engineer, think like an engineer, breathe like an engineer. Now think, "What would I love to see in a presentation? What would make me say 'Wow, that presentation was great!'" Close your eyes and in your mind you should be there for real. Let any ideas you have come to your mind and write them down. Include these ideas in your preparation and watch your audience respond.



CFP Photo

Ranch

Goose N Duck Ranch & Resort

Goose N Duck Ranch & Resort is located 30 minutes outside central Beijing. The village inn is open round the clock throughout the year. The ranch offers all the comforts of home, nestled in the countryside along a river, range of orchards and mountains.

Where: Goose N Duck Ranch & Resort, Beizhai Cun, Qiaozhi Zhen, Huairou District

Tel: 5928 3045-47



Hotel

Viva Las Vegas

Rejoice in the excitement of a Las Vegas Christmas and pamper yourself with vibrant choices from the buffet spread and a generous splash of Christmas desserts. A glamorous setting of live entertainment and lucky draws with a grand prize awaits guests.

Where: Grand Ballroom, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 1,988 yuan (include one glass of Gluhwein, unlimited drinks, local beer and wine, coffee and tea), 2,588 yuan (free flowing prosecco wine)

When: December 24, 6:30 pm

Tel: 6590 5566 ext 2132

Christmas party

Enjoy delicious food and wine in the Garden cafe, Jade garden and Sophia restaurant. Lose yourself in the lobby with a special performance by some lovely Christmas angels.

Where: The Presidential Beijing, 9

Fuchengmen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District
Tel: 5858 5588

Chinese-style Christmas

Beijing Opera is offering guests a distinctive Christmas Eve. Enjoy exquisite cuisine with classical performances and lucky draws in the Long Xi Function Room. The event is priced at 2,008 yuan with VIP passes for 2,288 yuan. The dinner at Emerald Cafe is priced 1,788 yuan with VIP passes for 2,008 yuan. The promotion is subject to a buy five, get one free, with an extra night in a deluxe room for VIP ticket buyers.

Where: Zhaolong Hotel, 2 Gongti Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 24, 6 pm

Tel: 6597 2299 ext 0216 or 6211

One East Restaurant

Celebrate Christmas in style at Hilton Beijing's award-winning One East. Chef de Cuisine Brandon Trowbridge has prepared a five-course Christmas menu of traditional favorites with a creative twist. The set sells for 850 yuan, including a welcome drink

and free flowing wine. Spend the night in a deluxe room and enjoy dinner as part of the 2,200-yuan overnight package, which also includes breakfast for two at Elements. All prices are subject to a 15 percent surcharge.

Where: One East Restaurant, Hilton Beijing, 1 Dongfang Lu, Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 5865 5000

Diamond & Pearl Christmas Hampers

Now is the best time to purchase a very special Diamond or Pearl-themed Christmas Hamper at the JW Marriott. Filled to the brim with yummy Valrhona Chocolate, sparkling rose wine, melt-in-your-mouth foie gras terrine and a Chocolate Santa, the JW Marriott Pearl Hamper at 1,288 yuan is the perfect gift for a woman. Available for 1,888 yuan, the Diamond Hamper is just right for every man this holiday season, offering tzar salmon fillets, Hartland Shiraz and assorted Christmas cookies.

Where: JW Marriott Beijing, 83 Jianguo Lu, China Central Place, Chaoyang District

Tel: 5908 8953

Charity

Christmas celebrations with children of Sun Village

Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel is hosting a Christmas party for 20 orphans from Beijing Sun Village. The children will spend an afternoon making gingerbread with executive pastry chef Jean-Luc Vasseur. The party will commence with a welcome note from Johnson Wong, the hotel's general manager, and proceed to the little chefs' hat-decorating session.

Where: Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel Beijing, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 6

Tel: 6561 8833

Aviation

Singapore Airlines Suspends Bangkok Services

Singapore Airlines is suspending its flights to and from Bangkok because of security problems and a lack of staff at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The suspension includes flights scheduled between Tokyo Narita and Bangkok, and flights between Bangkok and Singapore.

The airline will waive all cancellation and change fees for customers whose tickets to Bangkok on Singapore Airlines flights were issued prior to November 26 with departure dates up to and including December 7.

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Gan Tian at gantian@ynet.com.

Birds are everywhere



CFP Photo

By Gan Tian

Single guys, when they are not chasing girls, like to hang out with their single buddies. One evening, I got a call from Kent Huang, an editor from *Fashion Weekly*, conspiring to get the boys together for a night in town.

"A little bird told me tomorrow is Daniel's birthday," he said, referring to a friend who had just broken up with his girlfriend. "Why don't we throw him a party?"

"What is this little bird?" I said.

"It is a 'little bird' so don't ask anymore," he said. "So what do you think? I can book a room at MIX with my VIP card."

"All right, book a room for eight to ten. I will give you a guest list in a little while." I was too busy thinking about whom to invite that I forgot about the 'little bird' thing. I thought it was some metaphor.

My mother heard me making calls about the party and got upset about another late night out.

"You're attending another party tomorrow and won't be back until 3 am?" she said. "I think you're not getting enough sleep. You should take better care of yourself. You won't be young forever."

She kept rattling on and on, and I did not pay her much attention until there was suddenly silence.

I looked up to see her glaring at me. "You think my opinion is for the birds, don't you?"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Young people, you think you know everything." She left the room in frustration.

I suddenly felt ashamed because I upset her, but also because I did not understand what she meant by "my opinion is for the birds." I immedi-

ately headed to my bedroom, opened a dictionary of English idioms and looked up expressions under the category 'bird.'

OK, now I understood.

"For the birds," the expression which my mother used, means something not worth consideration and is unimportant.

"A little bird told me," which Kent Huang said during our phone conversation, is an expression used when the speaker reveals second-hand information but prefers to keep the identity of the informant a secret.

I came out of my room with confidence to face my mother. I found her in the kitchen. "I may not be back early, mom, but I must hang out with my friends while I'm still single," I said. "You know, birds of the same feather flock together."

She merely smiled her assent.

Blacklist

Beijing Today has come up with Blacklist, a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then this page is your new best friend. Watch out for it each week.

Local professor: Shida Zhu

1. The development changes our lives so that people are thrown off the track.

Though it is not grammatically wrong, the sentence's meaning changes depending on whether the phrase "so that" or "so much" is used. Please weigh the options carefully. This is a very interesting case to study. What follows the phrase "so that" is a clause of purpose, which is obviously not what the writer wants to express. I think what the writer means is: Development changes our lives so much that people are thrown off track. The clause that follows the phrase "so much" is a clause of consequence, which indicates the consequence of "development."

2. Post-contemporary life

You have Post-modernism, which is the period that follows Modern Times as defined by some philosophers. Contemporary times, meanwhile, refer to the period in which we are living. But what is "Post-contemporary" anyway? If the writer means the immediate future and wishes to come up with a new term, then he or she has to be clearer by saying "life in post-contemporary times." I suggest that people be very careful in trying to create new expressions, because the speaker will run into the danger of not being understood by anybody other than him or herself.

Native speaker:

Penny Turner

1. The development changes our lives so that people are thrown off the track.

The grammatical cure for this sentence, like Professor Zhu suggested, is to change it into: "Development changes our lives so much that people are thrown off track." The new sentence, however, still leaves me unsatisfied because its meaning is not clear to me. What does the writer mean by "thrown off track"? That people cannot keep up with the changes brought about by development? That some people get left behind in the rapid pace of development? If the original sentence is part of a long piece, then the writer might have hundreds of words to expound on it. But if you only have a sentence or two to express what is on your mind, then go straight to the point and be clear about what you mean.

2. Post-contemporary life

The word "contemporary" is an adjective that means "current" or "modern," referring to present times. Like Professor Zhu said, the term "Post-contemporary" does not exist. If the writer wants to refer to the period that follows present times, he or she can simply say, "in the future" or "in years to come." The sentence then would become: "Life in the future" or "Life in the years to come." Sometimes, the best way to say something is to say it in the simplest way.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please take a picture and send it to gantian@ynet.com together with your name and address.



Caution Drop Down

By Tiffany Tan

This is what you call sending a mixed message. The first line on the sign, including the illustration, tells pedestrians to be careful. But the second line tells them – no, orders them – to jump into the hole in the ground. Foreigner visitors might wonder if the Chinese people are looking out for their safety

and well-being, or inviting them to spice up their holiday by having a rare spelunking adventure.

But the Chinese text is here to save the day! What the sign says is: "Be careful you do not fall." It can also be changed to say, "Caution digging ongoing," "Caution hole in the ground," or some other variation.

Movie of the week

The sisterhood continues in this beloved story as Tibby, Lena, Carmen and Bridget graduate from high school and their talents and ambitions take each down separate paths. Each has her own journey to self-discovery, yet learns to rely on others and stay with best friends despite the changes that are taking place all around them. It's a story about love and how it can be found in the most unexpected places, but sometimes to get there you have to experience loss and heartache along the way. There are so many lessons about family, friendship and love. All in all, the movie ends leaving the viewer with satisfaction in knowing that the pants brought them all together again and strengthened the bond of friendship, but most importantly the sisterhood.

Synopsis

In *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2*, four young women continued the journey toward adulthood that began with the first installment. Now, three years later, these lifelong friends embark on separate paths for their first year of college and the summer beyond, but remain in touch by sharing their experiences as they always have — with honesty and humor. Discovering their individual strengths, fears, talents and capacity for love through the choices they make, they come to value more than ever the bond they share and the immeasurable power of their friendship.



The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2 (2008)

Scene 1

(Carmen tells the audience about the recent development regarding her friends and the pants that brought them together)

Carmen: For as long as I could remember, the four of us shared everything. Stories, secrets, laughter, broken hearts. So when we found a pair of pants that, by some miracle, fit each of us perfectly, we **took it on**(1) faith they'd come into our lives for a reason. That summer and the two that followed, the pants had the magic of keeping us together. No matter where they found us, They **saw us through**(2) times of love, times of loss, and times of change. And those moments where you feel your life just lifts up and takes off. That fall when we left for college, I watched each of my friends **settle into**(3) a new life. Tibby was at NYU. Bridget made the soccer team at Brown. And Lena? She was on scholarship at Rhode Island School of Design. They made it look so easy, fitting right in and making new friends, while I was at Yale just waiting for something to feel real or familiar. I was lost without them, especially when it felt like my mom was moving on too. I believed that the Sisterhood could survive anything. But maybe the pants had done just about all a pair of pants could do and the rest we had to learn on our own: how to become ourselves without losing each other.

Scene 2

(Bridget found out her father

had been hiding her grandma's letter from her all these years, so she goes to see her grandma to rekindle their relationship.)

Bridget (B): Hi. Greta? Um, I'm really sorry. I should have called first, but I'm ...

G: I think I know my own granddaughter. You're not running away from home, are you?

B: No, actually, I'm coming home, from Turkey.

G: That's an interesting sense of direction.

B: So you fix your own car?

G: Cars are easy. It's people you need a **manual**(4) for. Come on in. You must be exhausted.

B: Yep. **You don't even know**(5).

G: Why don't you go right up and get some rest?

B: Grandma. I'm sorry, I don't know which ...

G: I haven't heard from you in 10 or 12 years.

B: I know. Look, my dad, he hid your letters from me. I just found them this summer.

G: I see. So I guess we can skip junior high and high school. How's college?

B: It's good. I haven't declared a major yet, but ...

G: Got a **fella**(6)?

B: No, not at the moment.

G: Listen, you ought to kick up some trouble now because in 40 years, they'll all tell you you're old.

Scene 3

(After a pregnancy

scare, Tibby is very upset and takes her frustration out on her customers)

Customer (C): Do you know if this movie's any good?

Tibby (T): Well, that depends. I mean, yes, if you like **nauseatingly**(7) smarmy love stories that have absolutely no basis in reality.

C: Oh. Well, what if you're in the mood for, you know, something romantic?

T: I would go with Texas Chainsaw Massacre, the remake. It works for me.

Tibby's boss (TB): Thank you! Tibby, thank you. I apologize. Is there something I can help you find?

C: Just forget about it, man.

TB: Freaking the customers out, not one of the sales techniques we discussed..

Scene 4

(Lena goes on a date with her new friend Leo,

but cannot forget about her first love and tries to figure out whether Leo is right for her)

Lena: I can't believe you did all this.

Leo: Well, nothing's too good for my Muse.

Lena: What? Is that what I am?

Leo: Well, I've been feeling really inspired lately, so ... Why do I get the feeling like something's not right? You okay?

Lena: Yeah. I'm fine. I'm sorry, I'm just thinking. Have you ever been in love?

Leo: I love being in love.

Lena: Yeah, but ... do you think that there's one person that we're each meant to be with?

Leo: One person? No, not really. I know that's not the answer you

wanted to hear.

Lena: No, it's the way you feel. I like that you're honest.

Leo: But you may not be into it(8)?

Lena: No, I am. I wanna be.

Leo: That's two different things, right? But, I mean, Lena, you don't need to apologize for what you want.

Lena: But I don't even know what I want.

(By Milo Lee)

Vocabulary

1. **Take something on:** here it means to begin to have a particular quality
2. **See somebody through something:** to help and support someone during a difficult time
3. **Settle into:** to begin to feel happy and relaxed in a new situation, home, job, or school
4. **Manual:** a book that gives instructions about how to do something, especially how to use a machine
5. **You don't know:** here it emphasize how strong the feelings are
6. **Fella:** shortened form of fellow; a man, more often used to refer to a boyfriend
7. **Nauseatingly:** feeling annoyed or offended
8. **Be into something or somebody:** to like

